

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 13, 2021**

The WILMAPCO Council meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. John Sisson, Chair, opened the meeting at 10:02 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Members present:

Marc Coté, representing DeIDOT Secretary of Transportation, Nicole Majeski
Rich Hall, representing New Castle County Executive, Matthew Meyer
David Edgell, Delaware Governor's Appointee
Gwinneth Kaminsky, representing City of Wilmington Mayor, Michael S. Purzycki
Heather Murphy, Maryland Governor's Appointee
Stephen O'Connor, representing Cecil County Executive, Danielle Hornberger
John Sisson, representing Delaware Transit Corporation
Loucretia Wood representing Cecil County Municipalities

Members absent:

Guests, Observers:

Ian Beam, MDOT
Tyson Byrne, MDOT
Jade Clayton, MTA
Stan Corbett, AECOM
Tom Fruehstorfer, PAC Chair
Robert Hicks
Ted Januszka, Pennoni Associates
Natalie Martin, McCormick Taylor
Jeff Riegner, Whitman, Requardt and Associates
Derrick Sexton, MDOT
Andrea Trabelsi, New Castle County Land Use
Carolann Wicks

Staff members:

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner
Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
Sharen T. Elcock, Executive Assistant
Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Randi Novakoff, Outreach Manager
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner
Jacob Thompson, Senior Planner
Dawn Voss, Administrative Assistant
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by Dawn Voss.

3. MINUTES:

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Marc Coté seconded by Ms. Heather Murphy the Council approved the March 11, 2021, Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion passed with Mr. Dave Edgell and Ms. Loucretia Wood abstaining.
(05-13-21-01)

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

None.

5. COUNCIL MEMBERS' AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Chairperson's Report:

Mr. John Sisson said it has been fairly quiet since March. DTC is still managing COVID and other challenges. DTC hosted a series of Community Conversations this week for their September service change.

Nominating Committee Report

Ms. Heather Murphy said she, Mr. Herb Inden, and Ms. Connie Holland met to talk about nominees for next year's leadership. Mr. John Sisson agreed to stay on as chair, and everyone on the committee supports that nomination. Ms. Tigist Zegeye said Mr. Stephen O'Connor from Cecil County was nominated as vice chair. Ms. Murphy said Mr. O'Connor agreed to be vice chair, and the Nominating Committee agreed that Mr. Sisson and Mr. O'Connor would be great assets to WILMAPCO Council and running the meetings.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Andrea Trabelsi seconded by Mr. Marc Coté the Council approved the appointment of Mr. John Sisson as chair and Mr. Stephen O'Connor as vice chair of the WILMAPCO Council.

Motion passed. (05-13-21-02)

Council Member's Reports:

Mr. Stephen O'Connor said Cecil County did their transportation priorities letter in April. It was done differently this year to be in line with MDOT Section 25. They have their list of priorities, which was sent out for this year.

6. Executive Director's Report – Ms. Zegeye shared the following information:

- Mayor Spencer, who represented New Castle County Municipalities on the Council, retired effective April 15th. Staff sent ballots to all New Castle County Municipalities to elect his replacement on the Council. The ballots were due back by Friday, May 7th. Mayor Eric Scott Thompson of Elsmere has been elected to represent New Castle County Municipalities on the WILMAPCO Council. He will start in July, which is the beginning of the fiscal year.
- Staff is working with a coalition to plan a series of Open Streets events in Wilmington. The first one is planned for May 15th on Market Street.

- Staff is working with the City of Newark and Bike Newark to host virtual Bike Month activities and will participate in an outdoor kiosk on May 16th at the Newark Farmer's Market.
- The City of New Castle Transportation Plan Update Wikimap is available on the WILMAPCO website.
- The Maryland Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) applications are being accepted April 1st through May 17th.
- Social Justice Training for Planners is being held every other Friday, May through June. This is a series of five training sessions coordinated in partnership with Delaware APA and the University of Delaware.
- Staff is working with the Route 9 Monitoring Committee to promote the Route 9 Master Plan video. It has three hundred and sixty views so far.
- Staff continues to participate in New Castle County at 2050 Comprehensive Plan Deep Dive Sessions and has served as a panelist for the social equity deep dive session which was held on May 5th.
- Staff participated in the Wilmington Earth Day transportation panel discussion.
- The second Churchmans Crossing Advisory Committee meeting was held on May 3rd. The results of modeling work to date were presented, and the transportation and land use scenarios were discussed. A public workshop is planned for June 23rd.
- The Union Street Reconfiguration and Streetscape Improvement Study Advisory Committee met on April 22nd. A legislative briefing was held on April 26th and a public workshop is scheduled for May 19th.
- Staff will hold the second Delaware Truck Parking Focus Group meeting on May 20th.
- For the MARC commuter rail extension, MTA has begun the outreach tasks outlined in the Maryland House Bill 1236, has presented to WILMAPCO's TAC and PAC, and is on the agenda for this Council meeting.
- Staff met with representatives from Townsend in March to plan a walkable community workshop this summer.
- WILMAPCO will be hosting a Master of Public Health student intern this summer to support efforts to incorporate public health into planning and the work in Southbridge and the Route 9 Corridor. Healthy Communities Delaware will cover their salary.
- Staff will present WILMAPCO's Transportation Justice Plan at TRB's Conference on Advancing Transportation Equity in September.
- Staff will present on virtual public meetings at the 2021 Roadway Management Conference in October.
- Staff will be doing an air quality analysis for the FY 2023 TIP in New Castle County, which is set for adoption next March, but the analysis will begin late summer.
- With regard to the March financial report, WILMAPCO has expended about 67% of the budget. We are well under budget and proceeding with several projects.

7. Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Report:

Mr. Tom Fruehstorfer said this is the April 19th PAC meeting summary. The only Action Item was the UPWP Public Outreach section, which was presented by Ms. Randi Novakoff. PAC supports converting the printed Transporter newsletter to an electronic version and unanimously recommended approval of the public outreach portion of the document. Ms. Jade Clayton, of MTA, presented the status of the extension of MARC Service to SEPTA. There was discussion of linkages between Baltimore and D.C. and the frequency of existing service. PAC complimented WILMAPCO staff for their efforts to improve the SEPTA-MARC connection. Two PAC members commented that they would like to see the Elkton station reopen. There was a

robust discussion about using the various freight lines for commuter service. Ms. Novakoff presented the bicycle/pedestrian video that was created to explain bike and pedestrian planning, and how and why someone should get involved. The PAC thought the video was well done. One member thought the Civic League of New Castle County should have been listed as a partner. Ms. Novakoff explained that the partners listed were those with whom staff works more specifically on bike/ped planning efforts.

8. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Report:

Ms. Heather Dunigan said the TAC met on March 18th. There were no Action Items, but there were presentations on planned downtown Wilmington transit infrastructure improvements, presentation and discussion on the FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program, and a presentation on the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan. At the April 15th meeting, the Action Items included the Unified Planning Work Program, which the TAC recommended for approval. The TAC also reviewed technical scoring used for project prioritization, concurred with the technical scoring, and recommended its use for the project prioritization. There were presentations from MDOT/MTA on the MARC train service development outreach and the pedestrian/bicycle video.

ACTION ITEMS:

9. To Adopt the State/Local Cash and In-Kind Commitment for Fiscal Year 2022.

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said WILMAPCO is required to have 20% match for all federal funding that is received. This is contributed through state or local agencies and the match can be in-kind or cash. Member agency cash commitments for the FY 2022 are from the State of Maryland, \$12,803; from Cecil County, \$4,400; from the State of Delaware, \$416,817; from New Castle County, \$31,500; and from the City of Wilmington \$11,796. The remaining match is in-kind through an agreement with Cecil County and the Town of Elkton. The in-kind amount for the FY 2022 UPWP is \$8,403, which would entail one hundred and forty-six hours of in-kind services from staff of Cecil County and the Town of Elkton. The Federal Highway Administration has reviewed the FY 2022 UPWP In-kind Agreement and approved the in-kind contributions. The PAC did not take any action on this. The TAC reviewed the resolution at the April 15th meeting, and the WILMAPCO staff recommends the adoption of the state and local cash and in-kind commitment for the FY 2022 UPWP.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Marc Coté seconded by Ms. Gwinneeth Kaminsky the Council approved the Resolution to Adopt the State/Local Cash and In-Kind Commitment for Fiscal Year 2022.

Motion passed.

(05-13-21-03)

10. To Adopt the Draft FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said the FY 2022 UPWP describes the planning activities in the WILMAPCO region from July 2021 to June 2022. Since the Council meeting, the financial numbers and the descriptions in the document have not changed. Cash activity for the FY 2022 is \$2,420,190. In-kind activity for the UPWP is mainly coming from the Town of Elkton and Cecil County and is \$8,403. The total funding available for the FY 2022 UPWP is \$2,428,593. The new projects for FY 2022 that require consultant support are:

- Transportation Justice Analysis, \$30,000.
- Delaware Freight Plan Update, \$50,000.

Wilmington Initiatives Support, \$45,000.
City of Wilmington I-95 Cap Feasibility Study, \$100,000.
US 202 Corridor Monitoring Support, \$49,000.
Route 9 Corridor Master Plan Monitoring Support, \$35,000.
Southern New Castle County Master Plan Monitoring Support, \$10,000.
North Claymont Area Master Plan Monitoring Support, \$35,000.
Newport Transportation Plan Monitoring Support, \$35,000.
Governor Printz Boulevard Corridor Monitoring Support, \$35,000.
Churchmans Crossing Plan Monitoring Support, \$35,000.

The WILMAPCO PAC approved the public participation and public education portion of the UPWP at their April meeting. The draft was available on the WILMAPCO website from April 1st through May 3rd for public review and comment. The UPWP was our third most visited page during that time with one hundred and thirty-three views, however there were no comments. The TAC recommended Council approval of the UPWP at their April meeting with one objection. WILMAPCO staff recommends the Council adopt the UPWP. Once approved, it will be submitted to DelDOT, MDOT, Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations and implementation will begin in July 2021.

Ms. Andrea Trabelsi asked how many of the monitoring support projects are new monitoring efforts. Ms. Zegeye replied WILMAPCO currently has Route 40 and Churchmans Crossing, so out of eleven, ten are new projects.

Mr. Stephen O'Connor asked why there was an objection at the TAC meeting. Ms. Zegeye replied the MDOT representative at the TAC did not vote in favor, because there was some disagreement about the in-kind. Since that time, they have talked and resolved the issue, but at the meeting there was an objection to adopting the UPWP. Ms. Heather Murphy said the issue is that MDOT thinks they need to be involved in the in-kind service on the Maryland side, so there is now an agreement that next year, MDOT will be involved. Cash from the jurisdictions would be preferred rather than tracking staff time. Mr. O'Connor suggested that he, Ms. Murphy, and the Town of Elkton talk to work it out for next year. Ms. Zegeye said since the last meeting with Ms. Murphy and her staff, Ms. Zegeye reached out to BMC, the Baltimore MPO, and they are willing to share their state cash contribution with WILMAPCO, so hopefully this will be the last year that in-kind will be used, and WILMAPCO will receive the approximately \$8,000 in cash.

Ms. Loucretia Wood asked if Cecil County is \$4,400. Ms. Zegeye confirmed that it is. Ms. Wood said she did not hear any reference to where that was being spent. Ms. Zegeye replied that when we put together the UPWP, all the money is put together and then for each federal dollar WILMAPCO receives, 20% comes from the locals. So, it is spent throughout the tasks in the UPWP from administration, to project-specific, to projects that will be coming up such as the eleven new projects that were mentioned. The money is spread out through the entire UPWP, not for one particular project. Ms. Wood commented that there were none listed in Cecil County. Ms. Zegeye replied that is correct, because the amount of contribution from Cecil County at this time, there is not enough funds to put in for projects. Ms. Zegeye said she would talk about the amount of money from Cecil County with Ms. Murphy and Mr. O'Connor as well.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Gwinneth Kaminsky seconded by Mr. Marc Coté the Council approved the Resolution to Adopt the Draft FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Motion passed with Ms. Loucretia Wood abstaining.

(05-15-21-04)

11. To Approve the Proposed Project Prioritization for FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Ms. Heather Dunigan said for the project prioritization process, the staff applies a technical scoring to each of the projects on the list including projects currently in the Transportation Improvement Program and projects that are in the RTP that are unfunded. The hope is that this list is used by the state DOTs as a tool to determine which projects are deferred if there is a shortfall or added if there is an increase in funding. The project scoring was reviewed by the Air Quality Subcommittee and the TAC, which concurred with the technical scoring. Staff recommends as a priority overall that we first adequately fund preservation and safety projects and then use the technical scores as a guide to determine which projects might be deferred if necessary and which projects are added if there are additional funds. There were a few changes to the process. Environment Justice scores were adjusted based on the most recent Transportation Justice Report which provides additional funding for the Environmental Justice category based on areas that have high concentration of Black population. A category was added for Social Determinants of Health, and the Economic Development criteria category was adjusted to use WILMAPCO's Transportation Investment Areas. The Safety, Mobility Challenged, and Pedestrian Priority scores were updated based on the most recent data.

The projects have been grouped so the top of the list are projects that are currently in the TIP, which have been sorted by technical score and mode. Also added to the list, but not scored, are recent transportation plans which were adopted since the last project prioritization. Hopefully, there will be placeholder money added to the TIP to begin project development for this projects. Finally, there are projects that are not in the TIP. The technical scores can be used as guide to add those if money becomes available for them.

Ms. Andrea Trabelsi asked for more information about the sub-area plans. Ms. Dunigan said plans adopted since the last prioritization were included on that list. Prioritization used to be an annual process, but now is done every other year. Since the last prioritization, the New Castle County Bicycle Plan, the Newport Plan, the Concord Pike Plan, and the Southern New Castle County Plan have been added. There will be monitoring committees for some of these projects. The priority projects will be identified and hopefully added into the TIP, but for now these are placeholder lines as not every project that has come out of these plans has been prioritized. For recommendations from the New Castle County Bicycle Plan, priority projects were identified, and we are working with DeIDOT to do a technical assessment of those. DeIDOT is going to move forward and do additional planning for some of those.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Andrea Trabelsi seconded by Ms. Loucretia Wood the Council approved the Resolution to Approve the Proposed Project Prioritization for FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Motion passed.

(05-13-21-05)

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

12. MDOT/MTA MARC Train Service Development Outreach

Ms. Jade Clayton said she is presenting about the House Bill 1236, or the MARC Service Expansion Act in Maryland about expanding service into Delaware and Virginia. The three main

projects are extending service into Delaware, the Penn-Camden Connector that would provide some flexibility and operational efficiency for MARC service and extending south into Virginia. Today, service to Perryville is bi-directional, but with only one midday and no weekend service, and service was reduced due to COVID. Service to Newark today to connect with SEPTA is bi-directional but limited compared to the rest of the Newark and Wilmington Line. The proposed pilot service is two morning and two evening trains from Perryville to Newark. Construction just began on the Riverside Heavy Maintenance Yard improvements and so the Penn-Camden Connector will help connect more lines into that yard to build on that investment. Service south is extending to Alexandria, Virginia. MARC already connects to VRE and so this connection in the north will fill a gap. This will provide a one-seat ride as many commuters are looking for a shorter trip with fewer transfers in the D.C. area.

Anticipated challenges include thinking about the operating and capital budget, especially now with COVID-19. Commuter rail and bus services saw the largest reduction in ridership during COVID. Ridership is being monitored to anticipate when it will return to pre-COVID levels and also being projected out, based on modeling, to estimate what ridership might look like for these connections. Track capacity must be considered. They are on the Northeast Corridor Commission meetings about their strategic development plan and having coordination calls with host railroad owners and other operators on the tracks. There are many assets that need to be maintained and rolling stock requirements that if new service is proposed, seats are available to serve people who want to use that service. They also must continue to align with negotiating partners and think about the maintenance of traffic during planned construction to make it as painless as possible for riders while building to that future enhanced service.

Previous work on service to Delaware includes the MARC Cornerstone Plan which lays out a lot of the critical path asset investments and track investments needed. The Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan covers the Baltimore Metropolitan Area. There was an Elkton Train Station Feasibility Study done in 2014. The Perryville Transit-Oriented Development Plan and some other TOD plans done by WILMAPCO and some of the towns identify better connections that are helpful to support more service in the future. The Newark Train Station Study is now under construction. They last met with DelDOT, SEPTA, the MPOs and other stakeholders in February to talk about the ongoing ridership modeling effort before beginning discussion of what to do in response to this new Act.

As far as the Bill itself and its requirements, the three main pieces are stakeholder engagement, negotiations, and reporting. Stakeholder engagement is concluding now. This is the last meeting related to this outreach push. In April through May the team talked to leading employers including a variety of people in the D.C. area looking at the southeast extension and those in the north looking at the extension into Delaware. Labor representatives were invited to the roundtable, but MTA does not have direct relationship with the labor force, who work for Amtrak and CSX. The commuter rail service contracts out their workforce at MARC and MTA. They also have had meetings with rider advisory committees and regional planning boards to ensure that before they go into negotiations, they understand what people currently want from this service. The next step leading into May and June is to provide a proposed outline for the operational agreement. The details rely on completing any feasibility study which the ridership modelling will feed into, but they can begin now so when all other asset and maintenance improvements are in place, they are prepared to take the next step for service. In December of this year, the General Assembly will receive a report about all the work that was completed.

Commuter patterns show in Cecil County 32% work within the County, 34% commute to Maryland, D.C., or Virginia and 32% commute to Delaware and Pennsylvania. The STOPS

model map highlights a twenty-five-mile buffer around these two SEPTA and MARC/Penn Lines. The project team will look at pre-COVID ridership as a baseline and then look into 2035 and 2045 scenarios for comparison. WILMAPCO did a ridership study in 2017, but they decided to do this STOPS model to be ready to apply for potential federal grant funding, which seems to prefer this methodology.

There is not much to say about the Penn-Camden Connector just yet. It is in the south Baltimore area. The project team began a study in mid-April to do advanced design work and study of what is needed, if CSX plans to share the rail, or if they will be using it. The team will look at other needs like environmental, signaling, and positive train control to access Riverside Yard. They are expecting a draft report this summer or fall. Then, it will go into the report for the service expansion in December.

Service to Virginia was similarly included in a lot of the long-range plans. The State long-range plan and State rail plan are being updated this year. WashCOG also did a market assessment with support from MDOT. That was the most recent study done for the south-end extension. They are keeping an eye on the agreement between VRE and CSX and how this service extension aligns with their schedule and plans. There is ongoing coordination with all of the relevant organizations in the area. The process for the service to Virginia is very similar to extending north including meeting with stakeholders, presenting an outline of an operational agreement, continuing to negotiate that agreement, and reporting the progress in December.

13. New Castle County Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Rich Hall said New Castle County is re-writing their comprehensive plan in Delaware. The comprehensive plan has to be updated every ten years. The current plan was adopted by County Council in 2012. Mr. Hall considers this more a re-write than a minor update. The plan has a thirty-year planning horizon, so it was branded NCC@2050 as they are planning for 2050 and it essentially plans how and where the County grows. Work on the plan began in June 2020, so the process has taken place during COVID. Everything has had to be done remotely, which has pros and cons. There has been broader participation from people who do not go to meetings. The inertia to engage is lower when you can log into a Zoom meeting from anywhere with a connection and be as visible as you want to be. Hopefully, by fall they will be able to do some in-person engagement. A lot of outreach was done, and a lot of background information was received. There was much effort put into how to host these meetings and have people interact. Workshops were held last fall to work on the vision. Now the Deep Dive Workshops go a little further. There has been a logical progression from general issue identification and vision discussions in the fall to now identifying how to deal with them. They conducted many surveys and tried to empower other groups to do their own surveys with a Stakeholder Challenge. Traditional surveys and social media were used. The team worked to reach groups that traditionally have not been involved.

Generally, people want better connections and safe infrastructure for transportation, walking, and biking. Environmental issues came up significantly, whether it is flooding, stormwater, water quality, general pollution, and climate change issues. There was the question if enough land was being preserved or enough parks; if the County has the amenities that people want; and active recreation vs. passive recreation. Historic preservation came up as well. How and where there is growth has come up, as well including whether or not growth is targeted to growth areas well enough, and if built infrastructure is valued enough or continuing to spread out. Hopefully, this plan is where the County takes action on broad smart growth policies. Social and

environmental justice was also mentioned and was the topic of the most recent Deep Dive Workshop.

Key themes that drive goals, recommendations, and policy include a livable built environment for all; conservation and preservation; and a robust economy. As jobs have changed nationally, there is concern about what that means for old vs. new retail. There is the question of how to deal with online and brick and mortar shopping, which has a lot to do with economic development and land use. Sustainable growth was discussed. Another topic was placemaking. The County plans for the unincorporated parts of the County. The municipalities have their own placemaking and the County needs more of it in the appropriate places. It is important to have places that people love and want to come back to. There is more thought about the communities and how people interact with where they live, work, play, and learn. There is an effort to have diverse engagement to get a broader range of people engaged in development.

A lot of outreach was done. There were roughly one hundred-thousand different contacts, whether that is online hits or other, more direct, engagements. The highest number was in website views. Zoom was used to conduct workshops in a way that was engaging and informative, while asking people to engage with them via chats or breakout groups. All of the results were published to the web so people can review the Zoom file and chat. In the Deep Dive Workshops there is a panel of presenters and Q&A during the Zoom, but then a related but whole other conversation may be going on in chat. Surveys used various methods to get feedback such as selecting pictures, giving opinions, indicate if you like or dislike different types of development, and different services needed. The outreach done in the fall led up to a vision document and the first forum which was a culminating event where a vision was developed. They distributed that vision and had the Deep Dive Workshops to dig deeper into some of the key issues that were heard in the fall. These key issues were grouped into Deep Dive Sessions which were held in winter and spring with the last one being on May 5th about Environmental and Social Justice. Another part of outreach included working with the University of Delaware on a citizen planner course, Planning 101. That has been successful, and they are looking to have 101 graduates by the end of the year.

The first year of the Youth Planning Board is coming to an end. The Delaware Chapter of the American Planning Association helped with this. The Youth Planning Board was successful, and they are having a culminating event later this month. There will be speakers and students will give their recommendations. The team is starting to solicit participants for second year.

Workshop attendees favored higher density housing where it makes sense. Some people do not want density anywhere, but there has been a broader recognition of some of the smart growth principles in development and design and understanding that in some areas having more mixed use, higher density development makes sense. There were conversations asking if the best use of transit stations is being made, if more could occur there, how the corridor from Newark to North Claymont can work better as a system, and if we can get some transit-oriented development. That is a big part of the discussion in the Churchmans Crossing area. They are trying to do more Transportation Improvement Districts. The LOS still applies in the County as the default approach in how to deal with traffic in the Unified Development Code. They are taking steps to prevent that from becoming an impediment to smart growth. They are looking at multimodal and electric vehicles. Bikes are important and the County recently completed a Bike Plan with WILMAPCO. They are trying to work with WILMAPCO, the State and municipalities on bike lanes. Also, legislation for Complete Communities Enterprise Districts (CCED) was an update of language that has been in place for five years but has never been used. They are hoping to do one in Newport now that that legislation has been corrected. For land preservation,

they are going to try to be more consistent and clearer, with more direct follow through not only on plans but in policies and laws, with infrastructure, and where they are targeting growth and not targeting growth.

As Mr. Hall understands it, the transportation elements in the Comprehensive Plan are a few statements, but essentially defers to the RTP. He is sure the updated Comprehensive Plan will refer to the RTP, but it is important that the transportation element outlines what their priorities are. The County does not build roads, but can look at how land use, transportation and other priorities intersect and use that transportation element as a framework for transportation policies and priorities. It is not going to be project-specific in the comprehensive plan, though there may be some projects mentioned, but it will be their take on what is important in transportation as it relates to the comprehensive plan. Some things to be covered in NCC@2025 include targeted areas for growth that are transit-supportive; identify priority areas for bike, ped, and transit; transportation technology and coordination; integrated approach to land use and transportation; and better balance of jobs, housing, and activity centers.

In the fall there was initial engagement, issue identification, and sense of priorities. In the winter and spring, there was a little deeper exploration of those general ideas. The second forum will be July 15th to begin to look at these recommendations and policies. From there, drafting the plan will begin. There will be a third forum in the fall to present a rough-draft plan and then go through the adoption process.

To see the plan type NCC@2050 in any search engine or the website address is NCC2050.newcastlede.gov. The site has background information, workshop information and related materials. The email address is NCC2050@newcastlede.gov.

14. Southbridge Neighborhood Plan

Mr. Bill Swiatek said Southbridge is at the southern end of Wilmington on the peninsula next to the planned Wetland Park Project which is one of the main projects happening in the region. It is just south of downtown and east of the Riverfront development. Southbridge is working to update a neighborhood plan from 2006. The partners that are working on this are the Southbridge Civic Association and the South Wilmington Planning Network, which is a coalition of representatives from government agencies including WILMAPCO working with residents and non-profits. The plan is completely funded from Heathy Communities Delaware. The consultant is Asakura Robinson, who has done some great work in Minneapolis and New Orleans. This is their first time working in Delaware.

The 2006 Neighborhood Plan served Southbridge well for many years. It had the concept to create the central park to the immediate west of Southbridge, which is realized by Wetland Park. It also had a number of recommendations related to housing affordability, local jobs agreements with developers, destination creation, and transportation improvements. Some of these have progressed to some extent, and some have not. There is a brief section on South Wilmington in the 2028 Comprehensive Plan that outlines many great ideas like building strong neighborhoods, robust local economy, connections, and sustainability. This plan will provide action steps to realize some of those big goals in the Comp Plan. This is a health-centered plan, so the main focus will be on the foundations to health and wellness in the community including education, housing, health care, jobs, walkability, and social and community cohesion. The plan is guided by a diverse steering committee that includes the Civic Association. Eight representatives from the Civic Association are being paid to participate in this group to encourage resident participation, and that has been successful. The steering committee also

includes WILMAPCO, the City of Wilmington, local businesses, a variety of non-profits that are either active in Southbridge or nearby, and the University of Delaware. The project timeline is divided into three phases. The first phase is to understand conditions on the ground and that being completed this month. Then there will be the envisioning phase, where there will be working group meetings around key issues and some surveys to come up with the vision for the plan including mission and vision statements. Then this summer, the final phase will work on prioritizing some recommendations and action steps.

Southbridge is part of the census tract that encompasses the northern half of an area that includes the seaport, the Christina Landing development, and all of the new development that is planned for South Market Street. The problem with this is that the Riverfront development data skews Southbridge's data and vice versa. In Christina Landing home prices are generally around \$250,000, and in Southbridge home prices are less than \$100,000, so there are two very different communities together in the same census tract, which affects the equity indicators that come from the census, like urban tech deserts that were analyzed at WILMAPCO, for example. It has also had an impact on Opportunity Zone designation in Delaware. Because of Southbridge, this area is designated as an opportunity zone. This will impact Southbridge if this data skews too hard to the wealthier area as far as applying for grants and disadvantaged funds in the future. So, we are looking for ways to better delineate the block groups that are within this census tract to show Southbridge-specific data beyond just population. Mr. Swiatek spoke with Mr. Ron Holmes at New Castle County, who is the coordinator with the Census. They discussed how to better delineate block groups by creating another block group in South Wilmington, and it appears that will be a recommendation in the 2030 Census timeframe.

Some of the other existing conditions that were noted in South Wilmington is elevated poverty, high unemployment, higher bus dependency than most places, a lot of surrounding industrial land, and a lot of vacant land. There are many great things about the community. There is a really strong sense of community and identity. The Wetland Park is a feature that the community loves though it was not always that way. In early meetings with the City and residents, people opposed it, but through outreach residents came to see the benefit of the park, not only for flood relief, but also as a space to walk and engage with nature. Neighborhood institutions are another key thing that people love about the community. Also, there is generally a lower crime rate. There are areas in Southbridge that have elevated crime, but the community does not have much crime compared to other places in Wilmington.

Among the challenges that face Southbridge, the most significant is climate and flooding. The Wetland Park is an attempt to begin to get ahead of sea level rise. Finding agreement on issues between residents is a challenge at times. Pockets and perception of crime is a challenge. Education is very much needed in this plan. Also, the residents need to benefit from area development and potential changes to the neighborhood as development happens around Southbridge. That is key in what is happening generally in Wilmington and around the world with growing socio-economic inequities that are appearing. Since the year 2000 in Wilmington, there has been growth at the top and growth at the bottom of the income scale. There has been success in increasing the percent of households that are making over \$100,000 per year (adjusted for inflation). At the same time, the percentage of those living in poverty in the city has also increased, going from 21% to 26% with the most recent data. This is also a racial inequity, specifically in Wilmington. In looking at median income comparative data between 2000 and roughly 2017, White Wilmingtonians are making more money, from \$60,000 to \$65,000, but the median income for Black households has decreased significantly from \$42,000 to \$31,000. So equitable development is emerging as very important in this plan to reverse some of that trend by providing benefits, job creation, and affordability to residents. Local entrepreneurship is

another key priority in the area, as well as resilience to flooding and sea level rise. There is a planned sewer and stormwater separation that is not funded in Southbridge but would benefit the community with getting ahead of the flooding situation. Mobility is another key issue in South Wilmington. Southbridge is fairly bus dependent. About a quarter of people are zero car households in Southbridge. These connections need to be strong to serve that population. There is a need for enhanced traffic calming and healthy streets in Southbridge. A streetscape project has taken place over the last decade, but that project needs to be strengthened based on feedback received from the residents. New Castle Avenue and Heald Street are still pretty dangerous for pedestrians to cross. Residents are concerned about the amount of traffic and trucks there. Trucks are a key issue in Southbridge in terms of the volume of trucks moving through legally on minor arterials and also the number of trucks making illegal cut-throughs on local streets. The project team is trying to understand where those illegal moves are taking place and working with the study that WILMAPCO is doing at the port on potential diversion routes that trucks could take to reduce the volume coming through the community. Then, connectivity from Southbridge to other places is important. The 8th Street Pathway is being built as well as a trail through the Wetland Park. There is a need to connect to the new bridge potentially through a new bike/ped path, as well as connect to Eden Park through a very rough stretch of sidewalk south of the community. Better bike and walking connections to the Heald Street Bridge that goes over the Christiana River is also needed.

The study is in the first phase now. There is a survey out in the field that will have a final push next week. The team is hoping to get a good sample. Following that, the consultants will visit in June, and there will be another public workshop in that timeframe to review some of the recommendations and kick off another survey. Later in the summer the study should be done. Survey 1 is in the field right now and there is also an online version. A raffle is being used to encourage participation and get a good sample. Administrators of that survey are locals for the most part. There are five Southbridge residents, including one youth. Teen Warehouse in Wilmington is supporting the effort with four Teen Executives that have been going door to door.

It is important this is not just a paper plan, but there is some early implementation. A key network project has been the revitalization of the Barbara Hicks Park. A few years ago, many door-to-door surveys were done to create a vision to enhance Hicks Park with refurbished courts, playground equipment for all ages, and new street trees to mitigate some heat islands and flooding. So, any other money that received from Healthy Communities Delaware will be likely be considered for this park to show some early implementation of some of the planning work that is being done.

15. Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning Video

Ms. Randi Novakoff said for the past six to eight months staff has been working on a series of outreach videos. This video on Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning is the second completed one. A Route 9 Master Plan video was completed and is currently on YouTube. There will be videos featuring Who is WILMAPCO, How an Idea Becomes a Project, and Transportation Justice. The videos are designed to be a simple and easy way for someone to understand planning, why it is important, and why they might want to get involved in planning. The videos are funded through grant from the Federal Highway Administration. This video is three minutes long. It was edited for length after receiving feedback from the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group, the TAC, and the PAC. *The video was shown.* Staff worked on the video with King Creative on Market Street in Wilmington who also does Tropo, the WILMAPCO mascot. The video will be posted on YouTube and shared through various channels and newsletters. It will be shared with New Castle County and Cecil County libraries. Staff met with the Route 9 committee to

brainstorm ideas to push the Route 9 video and came up with some good ideas. Staff will reach out to public access channels to see if they will show the videos. We welcome any additional ideas on where this video can be shared and any other input.

Mr. Sisson said DART, and probably DeIDOT, have social media. He suggests that Ms. Novakoff send it to all of the Council members, and they can share it that way.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

16. DeIDOT's Administrative Modification Request Letters

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. Gwinneth Kaminsky made a motion to adjourn, Ms. Heather Murphy seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

ATTACHMENTS: (0)