

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 4, 2021**

The WILMAPCO Council meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. John Sisson, Chair, opened the meeting at 10:03 a.m.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

**Members present:**

David Edgell, Delaware Governor's Appointee  
Herb Inden, 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  
Pamela Steinebach, representing DeIDOT Secretary of Transportation, Nicole Majeski  
Eric Thompson, Mayor of Elsmere, representing New Castle County Municipalities  
Andrea Trabelsi, representing New Castle County Executive, Matthew Meyer

**Members absent:**

Loucretia Wood, representing Cecil County Municipalities

**Guests, Observers:**

Tyson Byrne, MDOT  
Tom Fruehstorfer, PAC Chair  
Catherine Salarano, MDE  
Derrick Sexton, MDOT SHA  
Jolyon Shelton, DNREC

**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. Eric Thompson seconded by Ms. Andrea Trabelsi the Council approved the September 9, 2021, Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion passed.

(11-04-21-01)

#### **4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:**

None.

#### **5. COUNCIL MEMBERS' AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

##### **Chairperson's Report:**

Mr. John Sisson said the annual Stuff the Bus event begins next week. It will start in New Castle County on November 10<sup>th</sup> at the Shoprite on Route 4. They will be at the ShopRite on Route 896 on Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup>. They will be at Rodney Square one day as well as the ShopRite on Route 202. It is a great event that DTC likes to host providing food for the Food Bank of Delaware. Mr. Sisson asks members to please pass the information on and come out and help this great cause. DTC is beginning the process for the spring 2022 service change. Public hearings will be on December 8<sup>th</sup>. Two different one-hour virtual public hearings will be held, and the details of the proposal will be out shortly.

##### **Council Member's Reports:**

Mr. Stephen O'Connor said Cecil County started the initial review of their 2010 comprehensive plan. A small committee is assisting with that process. At this point, it is just an assessment of where they are and what has been done so far. It is still very early on, but that process is underway. They are very excited to see the Bainbridge Naval Base receive approval from the Town of Port Deposit. That project is rapidly heading to completion, which would affect the 276 to 275 to 222 corridor along with the exit in the Perryville area.

Ms. Andrea Trabelsi said New Castle County has been working on their comp plan for the last year and a half. As they enter into some of the later phases, a couple of public forums are coming up in December. One is virtual, and one is in-person. Details are available on [ncc2050Newcastle.gov](http://ncc2050Newcastle.gov). A draft of the full plan will be published sometime this month.

Ms. Pamela Steinebach said DeIDOT is compiling comments for the draft FY 23 to 28 CTP. The comment period is open until November 15<sup>th</sup>. They will be presenting to the Council on Transportation on December 8<sup>th</sup> to review the comments, then continue with their procedures.

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

- Staff participated in a Transportation Performance Measure Workshop on September 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> with DeIDOT and FHWA.
- The Transportation Justice Plan will be featured as a best practice case study on FHWA's Transportation Capacity Building Program website. Staff also discussed the TJ initiative at an APA Delaware Lunch and Learn on October 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff conducted a Walkable Community Workshop in Middletown on September 29<sup>th</sup> and are currently working on a draft report.
- The Churchman's Crossing Plan Update project team has developed a draft plan which was presented to the advisory committee on September 27<sup>th</sup> and to the public on October 25<sup>th</sup>. Comments will be accepted, through November 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- The Union Street Reconfiguration and Streetscape Improvements Advisory Committee met on October 13<sup>th</sup>. A virtual public workshop was held on October 27<sup>th</sup>.
- The I-95 Cap Feasibility Study Advisory Committee held an in-person meeting on September 30<sup>th</sup>, which included a walking tour. A follow-up virtual meeting was held on

November 2<sup>nd</sup> with advisory committee members who were not available for the first meeting. A public, in-person meeting is scheduled for November 17<sup>th</sup>.

- The Townsend Walkable Community Workshop was held on July 12<sup>th</sup>. A presentation was made to the Townsend Town Council on September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- A public workshop for the New Castle County Transportation Plan was held on September 13<sup>th</sup> and the advisory committee met on October 26<sup>th</sup>. An in-person council workshop is scheduled for November 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff participated in the Wilmington Transit Corridor Workshop on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- The APA Delaware Annual Meeting is scheduled for the afternoon of November 10<sup>th</sup>. No registration is required. Login information is available on the APA Delaware website. The Chapter's Fall Conference will be held on December 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the flyer will be shared in the chat.
- For the September financial report, WILMAPCO has expended approximately 22% of the budget.

Bill Swiatek posted in the chat: APA Delaware Annual Meeting on November 10:

<https://mcusercontent.com/ed4dc2de1b5d47944ab963bbb/images/2a146905-2415-5075-0c60-dcec1a06b0b6.jpg>

APA Delaware Fall Conference on December 1st and 2nd :

<https://i1.wp.com/delawareapa.wpcostaging.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2021-Fall-Conf-Flyer-10152021.jpg?ssl=1>

## **7. Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Report:**

Mr. Tom Fruehstorfer, PAC Chair, said the October 18<sup>th</sup> PAC meeting had no action items and three presentations. The first presentation was the City of New Castle Transportation Plan, presented by Ms. Heather Dunigan. The presentation included information about the in-person virtual public workshops that were held. There was discussion about how many accidents have taken place there. There was a question of whether a round-about is possible at SR 273 and Delaware Street, which Ms. Dunigan explained is not feasible due to the proximity of the train tracks. There was also discussion about the value of in-person versus virtual workshops. Ms. Dunigan shared that she got valuable input via the virtual format. The second presentation was the Townsend Walkable Community Workshop, also presented by Ms. Dunigan, who shared the information about a Walkable Community Workshop that was conducted in the town of Townsend. There was discussion about the possibilities for improving Wiggins Mill Road. The third presentation was on the Union Street Reconfiguration and Streetscape Improvement and was presented by Mr. Dave Gula. Mr. Gula shared information about the visioning process for this project, including public workshops, advisory committee meetings, and survey results. He also shared information about various project alternatives, and which scored the best. There was some discussion about the number of parking spots in the different alternatives

## **8. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Report:**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said the TAC meeting was on September 16<sup>th</sup> with no action items. There were three presentations, including the City of New Castle Transportation Plan, the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan, and the Townsend Walkable Community Workshop. For the October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting there was a list of actions. The TAC recommended amending the UPWP with carry over tasks. There were two TIP amendments that were reviewed and were recommended for amendment. The TAC also recommended approval of the technical scoring for the bike/ped statewide program with one abstention. Mr. Matt Rogers from New Castle County presented on their comp plan update. Mr. Gula presented on the Union Street project.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**9. To Amend the FY2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) with Carry-Over Tasks**

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said we are asking to amend the FY 22 UPWP by adding the incomplete work tasks or carry-over tasks from prior years. The UPWP can be amended from time to time by Council to add or modify work tasks. Eleven tasks had not been completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> of 2021. These include the Churchman’s Crossing Plan Update, New Castle County Route 40 Program Development Support, Congestion Management System Consultant Support, University of Delaware Park & Ride, Regional Transportation Performance Measurement Development, Statewide Truck Parking, Port Circulation Study, First and Final Freight Mile Network Development Study, Member Agency Consultant Support, City of New Castle Transportation Plan, and the Union Street Reconfiguration and Streetscape Improvement Study. The total amount we are asking to carry over to FY 22 is \$507,250. Prior year carry-overs come from Maryland FHWA, FTA, State, and Cecil County. From Delaware, similarly, they come from FHWA, FTA, State, New Castle County, and the City of Wilmington. There is \$712,633 available to be programmed, but the \$507,250 is being requested exclusively to continue work on the consultant projects. This was presented to the WILMAPCO TAC, who recommended adoption. The PAC took no action. Also, note that DelDOT requires that we do not have multiple agreements open, so this would continue moving funds forward. The staff recommends that the Council amend the UPWP to include prior work tasks that have not been completed.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Dave Edgell seconded by Ms. Andrea Trabelsi the Council approved the amendment of the FY2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) with Carry-Over Tasks

Motion passed. (11-04–21-02)

**10. To Amend the WILMAPCO FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), New Castle County Element.**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said this project is requested by DelDOT to install onboard video information systems on buses, which will provide visual and audible real-time information. Currently there are audible announcements on the buses, but that is not helpful for those who are hearing impaired, so this is a great addition. This will be about a \$2.7 million dollar project.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Eric Thompson seconded by Ms. Andrea Trabelsi the Council approved the amendment of the WILMAPCO FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), New Castle County Element.

Motion passed. (11-04–21-03)

**11. To Amend the WILMAPCO FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), New Castle County Element.**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said this is a project request from DelDOT to procure six electric buses for use in New Castle County as well as charging equipment. This is about a \$7.2 million project.

Ms. Andrea Trabelsi asked how the buses and charging infrastructure will be distributed. Mr. Sisson replied there are two aspects of it. Right now, DTC does route verification on the routes that the buses can physically maneuver; how well they can traverse it; and how long they can be out there. A hilly road like Maryland Avenue is more challenging than a flatter road for the

electric buses. The charging infrastructure is being strategically placed out there to keep the buses out longer. An in-route charger will be placed at Prices Corner, but the other one is being planned for the Christiana Mall area transit hub that is going to be built. They will be strategically at hubs to have more buses on more routes and keep them out longer. This was an FTA Low-No grant that DTC received.

**ACTION:** On motion by Ms. Andrea Trabelsi seconded by Mr. Stephen O'Connor the Council approved the amendment of the WILMAPCO FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), New Castle County Element.

Motion passed.

(11-04-21-04)

## **12. To Approve Ranking of Project Prioritization for the 2021 Delaware Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Candidate Projects.**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said this is a grouped project within the Statewide Element of the TIP for Delaware and it funds bicycle and pedestrian improvements. They are locally generated projects, and in 2019 we did a call for projects by soliciting from the local governments. A list of about thirty projects was submitted. This time, there was not much notice to get the project list. Hopefully next year the call for projects will be in conjunction with the TAP program. Because of the short turnaround time, we drew from the project prioritization list for the TIP, which was approved by Council in May. DelDOT was looking for a much shorter list than the thirty bike/ped projects included, so the top ten projects were selected. A few projects were removed from the list, because they were too vague, too small, or too big. The information on the Council ranking line is what Council adopted in May. This was presented to the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group, who had a lively discussion. Many other projects were brought up for consideration as priority projects including things from the recent New Castle County Bicycle Plan that were not included in the prioritization in May, because it was new. In the end, the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group recommended keeping the list as is, except that there were no City of Wilmington projects on the original top tier list. So, it was recommended that the City of Wilmington, in coordination with DelDOT, recommend one or two projects. They came up with the 12th Street project, which scored well using the project prioritization process. It is third place on the list. This was presented to the TAC and was approved with one abstention. After Council approval, it will be submitted to DelDOT. They will evaluate it using their process. Because this will be competing with projects statewide, only a couple of the top projects are expected to be funded as limited funding is available.

Ms. Andrea Trabelsi asked for more information about the Wilmington project and that Ms. Dunigan said that they ranked it. She asked if it came from the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group with Mr. Matt Harris speaking there. Was this the top project from the Wilmington Bike Plan? Ms. Dunigan replied it was one of the top projects. It is one that the City of Wilmington opted to put on the list because it was substantial enough to go through this program. The project is a combination of protected bike lane and shared use pathway for a fairly good stretch of road. So, it scored well for the project prioritization process, and hopefully will score well through the DelDOT process.

**ACTION:** On motion by Ms. Andrea Trabelsi seconded by Ms. Pam Steinebach the Council approved the Ranking of Project Prioritization for the 2021 Delaware Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Candidate Projects.

Motion passed.

(11-04-21-05)

**13. To Approve the Proposed Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Member Reappointments.**

Ms. Randi Novakoff said four PAC members are up for approval of another three-year term on the PAC. That includes Ms. Pat Folk representing Cecil County, who has been a member since 2003; Mr. Givvel Marrero with the Delaware Hispanic Commission; Ms. Gail Seitz with the City of New Castle, who has been a member since 2015; and Mr. Barry Shotwell who represents the 7/40 Alliance, who has been a member since 2015. Ms. Folk, Ms. Seitz, and Mr. Shotwell have expressed a desire to serve another term. Since the Council mailing went out, Mr. Marrero let us know that the Delaware Hispanic Commission will be appointing someone else to sit on the PAC. PAC and TAC took no action on this.

Ms. Andrea Trabelsi said last year someone involved with the county's youth planning board was participating in the PAC and asked if that is something that Ms. Novakoff would like to continue. If so, the youth planning board is running again. Ms. Novakoff replied that the PAC would love to have someone else from the youth planning board, especially since Ms. Kathryn Economou has gone to graduate school. Ms. Trabelsi will see if she can make an announcement at an upcoming meeting.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Eric Thompson seconded by Mr. Stephen O'Connor the Council approved use the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Member Reappointments.

Motion passed.

(11-04-21-06)

**PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

**14. City of New Castle Transportation Plan**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said the City of New Castle Transportation Plan had a public workshop in September, as well as a recent advisory committee meeting. An in-person public workshop will be held November 9<sup>th</sup>. The City of New Castle includes a historic center, residential areas, abundant open space, and a limited amount of commercial and industrial space. The purpose of the plan is to look at improving the connectivity of the community, particularly for walking and biking; enhance health and livability through transportation; reduce some issues with illegal truck traffic; improve safety; look at addressing flooding and sea level rise impacts; improving gateways to the community; and looking at parking.

The team is midway through the process and has some draft recommendations, which they continue to revise. Preferred recommendations will be selected to develop the final report. Public involvement is important for this project. The team is working with the City of New Castle, DelDOT, DART, and Century Engineering as our consultants. The advisory committee includes various local organizations. There has been a mix of in-person and online meetings and events, including two online public workshops and an online Wikimap. The team did a pop-up kiosk over the summer and will have an in-person workshop next week. The public are concerned about crossing the street at some of the major intersections; and disconnects between some of the pedestrian and bike facilities. There have been some transit comments, mostly related to connections outside the city such as the Wilmington Train Station and the airport. Related to traffic, a lot of the same intersections that are challenging for pedestrians are also challenging and congested for traffic; and many of the intersections direct people mistakenly into the historic center and encourage cut through traffic rather than keeping traffic on major roads. Freight concerns include trucks travelling on residential streets. Flooding is a major issue in many of the locations within the community. There is a desire for better street scaping and beautification, and better management of parking. The pop-up workshop over the summer was in conjunction

with a Wednesday night concert in the park and there may have been more people at the pop-up workshop than a normal workshop. Many of the same issues were heard, including cut-through traffic, congestion issues, condition of the sidewalks, and desire for more parking.

At the September 13<sup>th</sup> public workshop, draft ideas were presented, polls were interspersed throughout the Zoom meeting, and there was Q&A at the end. One of the ideas presented was reducing the speed limit throughout the community. For the residential streets, a speed limit of fifteen miles per hour was recommended, and a slight reduction in speed was recommended on some other roads. This received sixty-seven percent support on the poll. The advisory committee asked the team to look at congestion along to SR 273 from town towards the farmer's market area and noting a lot of truck traffic along here as well. The US 13 to SR 273 intersection, Harris Corner, was already identified through DelDOT's safety program. Preliminary ideas were developed by DelDOT, and it is recommended that DelDOT continue to evaluate those as that project would be too large for this study. Some people said they would like to see SR 273 widened, but traffic volumes over the last three years do not justify a four-lane road for this section, so it is recommended that the focus be on improving the intersections.

The SR 273/SR 141 intersection is a big, vehicle-oriented intersection. It was improved recently, but it is still not pedestrian friendly. A trail runs on the north side of the intersection and people commented that the pedestrian access is poor. Two options were presented at the public workshop, and both had lukewarm support. Only thirty-three percent supported either option; seven percent supported both; but twenty-two percent supported neither. Both are similar as they tie in the pathway system on the north and add new pathway to the other side of the intersection. They recommend converting the five-legged intersection to a four-legged intersection, which cause concerns about property access. The team took another look and determined there were not enough improvements of the signal timing to justify closing off 14th Street. At the advisory committee, the Protected Intersection option was presented. This separates the crosswalks for bikes and pedestrians, adds additional landing areas at the intersection for people waiting to cross the street, and improves conditions for people walking and biking. This was well received at the advisory committee.

The Ferry Cut Off/Delaware Street intersection directs traffic from SR 273 to Delaware Street which leads to the historic district. It is not a real gateway to that historic district. The shopping center with the Walgreens located here is the major shopping area in town, and the crosswalks are difficult. Two options were presented at the public workshop. One improves the multi-use pathway through the intersection and makes minor improvements on the crosswalks. The other creates more of a gateway where cars physically have to turn to go to the historic district. People at the public workshop and the advisory committee strongly favored option two.

Ferry Cut Off at Chestnut Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Street physically directs people into the historic district. In order to stay on Route 9, traffic must physically turn at this location. There are no pedestrian facilities to cross in this area, so people from the northeast side of town have a challenging time accessing the historic district. There are also flooding issues at this area. One option presented was called the Separated Road Option, which physically closes off access at this location, so people would have to go to the next street to make the connection into the historic district. The other option was called the Dutch Left. Subconsultants from the Netherlands were brought in, and this was one of their suggestions. It smooths out through traffic on Route 9 to eliminate the turn and make a logical flow of traffic. To get from Route 9 to the historic district, drivers would physically turn or U-turn at a new island area. The Dutch Left was favored at the public workshop and the advisory committee like this option. There is more green space available with

this, as well as a strong pedestrian crossing. The hope is the additional green space and less impervious pavement will also help with some of the flooding issues at this location.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Washington Street intersection is also confusing for those who want to stay on the main road. The main road travels from 7<sup>th</sup> Street up Washington Street, which is Route 9. Many trucks travel through this area, but traffic has to physically turn so people go straight and get lost in the historic district. One option presented is improving the signage to make the turn obvious. The second option is using a combination of islands, striping, and bump-outs to make a smoother movement for that turn. This concept was fairly strongly favored.

Looking at the nonmotorized transportation network, New Castle is really blessed to have the Jack Markell Trail as well as Battery Park. There is a gap in between, and some other gaps in the area. East Coast Greenway travels through this area. The School Lane Path project was one of the bicycle/pedestrian projects that were submitted in 2019 to DeIDOT, and DeIDOT is moving forward with planning for that study now. Ninety-three percent of participants at the workshop supported expanding the nonmotorized transportation network, which ties into the recently approved Route 9 Paths Plan that bridges New Castle County with the City of New Castle on the northeast end of town. South Street is a key project because it would connect the Markell Trail to Battery Park. It is a narrow right-of-way, which is challenging with on-street parking and residential use as well as some commercial use. It would tie into Battery Park, which has planned expansions to their pathways. It is recommended that the sidewalk be converted to a multi-use path, narrowing the travel lanes, which allows the on-street parking to remain. The multi-use path is recommended to be ten feet in some of the more constrained areas. Another example project is the Cherry Street area, which is a connection to Ferry Cut Off. There is a public parking lot on the other end of the street, and because the sidewalks are fairly undefined people just park on the sidewalks. Improving the sidewalks to keep people from parking on them is recommended. This was well received at the workshop. One option that was not supported at the workshop is expanding the parking lot at Chestnut Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Thirty-nine percent did not support this, and many angry emails and phone calls about this were received after the workshop. The team is suggesting to council, and at the next public workshop will unveil the idea of having expanded parking at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Chestnut to the north. There was talk about this in the City of New Castle before. There are concerns that it might be too far from the downtown area, but it is only a five-minute walk to Delaware Street, so with additional streetscaping to entice people to do the walk it is a reasonable distance.

Flooding is major issue in the community. Eighty-two percent supported doing flood mitigation. Major areas people have mentioned are Route 9 toward the south side of town and at the Ferry Cut Off and Chestnut Street intersection. There is a project in the TIP for flood mitigation, which is scheduled for construction in FY 2028. Potential locations for beautification as gateways were considered and ninety percent supported this idea. All the options support many different goals of the plan, so a matrix was used to show the different benefits of each of the recommendations.

## **15. Southbridge Neighborhood Plan**

Mr. Bill Swiatek said the Southbridge Neighborhood Plan was completed last month. Southbridge is north of the City of New Castle, on the south side of the City of Wilmington, next to a wetlands park that is being developed. The Wilmington Riverfront is about a mile to the west. The task of this project was to update a 2006 neighborhood plan that served the community well for the past fourteen years and build off the recommendations in the 2028 City of Wilmington Comprehensive Plan. The partners on this plan were the South Wilmington Planning Network, which is a coalition that WILMAPCO helps lead, and the Southbridge Civic



Association. The project was funded by Healthy Communities Delaware, which works statewide to uplift communities and address social determinants of health concerns. The consultant was Asakura Robinson, who worked in Delaware for the first time, and did a good job.

A robust steering committee was assembled to guide the project including representatives from the civic association. The team experimented with paying representatives a stipend to come to the meetings. There was a representative from the youth community to inject a young person's view into the discussions. The steering committee also included WILMAPCO, the City of Wilmington, local businesses, the University of Delaware, and local nonprofits that operate in Southbridge. The project began at the beginning of last year, with a phase where the team worked on understanding the background, the opportunities, and the challenges that the community experienced. A couple of surveys were taken over the course of the study period. In phase two there was an envisioning session, where the action items that would be in the draft plan were proposed. Then phase three was finalizing those action items, and again, the plan was completed last month.

Public outreach was very important. There were five steering committee meetings and four public workshops. There was a mixture of in-person and virtual workshops. The team found that different crowds came to in-person versus virtual events. A lot of emphasis was placed on surveys to try get a sampling of needs in the community. The surveys were taken door-to-door because Southbridge is a tech desert. Only eight percent of people that took the survey did it online. Just as having fun events worked for the City of New Castle, the team did the same thing in Southbridge. There was a community barbecue with great food and DJs, and people came to learn about the plan, but also to have fun. There were forty-eight different interviews with stakeholders and three resident leader meetings to run the process.

People love the community's strong sense of identity. People support the development of the wetland park. Neighborhood institutions are a source of pride, such as churches and Neighborhood House, which is a community center. There is a local health care center. The community has a lower crime rate relative to other parts of the city, which is a source of pride. Some of the challenges are elevated poverty in this area and high unemployment. The area is more bus dependent, has a lot of surrounding industrial land, and a lot of vacant land around the community that can be put to better use.

The plan is divided into different action item categories with action items related to community empowerment, economic revitalization, youth and education, affordable living, better health, resilience to climate change, and improved mobility. There are some mobility recommendations in other action items, but in looking at the improved mobility category, these are the existing mobility efforts. Traffic calming and healthy streets is something that has been going on in Southbridge beginning with the 2006 Neighborhood Plan. WILMAPCO did a traffic study in 2008, and out of that came a few Safe Routes to School projects and an ongoing streetscape project which is in its third phase now. These projects try to slow the traffic and help beautify the neighborhood. There is work to reduce truck traffic, which is a chronic challenge within the community. The Public Works Department is trying to re-time the signals to reduce vehicle speeds. WILMAPCO was working on a Port Access Study, which is looking at ways that were recommended through the Route 9 planning effort to reduce the number of trucks that cut through Southbridge.

Connectivity is a goal of the plan as it was with the 2006 plan. A Street pathway connecting Southbridge to Christiana Landing was recently completed. A trail will go through the wetlands park, which was going to be a great amenity for the community. Efforts are being made to

connect the new bridge over the Christina River with Southbridge through a southern connection. One of two new efforts being planned is a road diet to the south of Southbridge. The Route 9 Master Plan called for a road diet coming into Southbridge that would theoretically stop at Terminal Avenue and then go south. Also, DelDOT is planning a bridge rehab at D Street and as part of that project, doing a road diet on the bridge and going south on Heald Street. One of the first recommendations is to update that circulation study to see if these road diets could be extended into Southbridge and if that would help more aggressively calm traffic in the community. The streetscape projects that have taken place have improved the beautification but have not led to a reduction in speed. An analysis is needed of what the road diet impacts would be and what the concept could look like, including impacts of the build out of the South Market Street Master Plan and port expansion to ensure it would work. As part of that, we are considering the removal of the sweep on D Street, which is a high traffic accident crash area and also a source of high speeds coming into the community, as well as other improvements.

In the Route 9 Plan, the preferred concept south of Southbridge was going from two lanes in each direction to one lane with space for a bike lane and a center turn lane. There would be a round-about at a Terminal Avenue then that configuration would extend north. As a potential concept to get the conversation started for New Castle Avenue, right now, it is two lanes and one direction heading north. There is space to take one of the lanes out. Then, extra space can be added for sidewalk and a couple of landscape strips in either direction. This has a dual purpose to address climate resilience goals and calm traffic. A couple of other connectivity destinations in terms of pedestrian access include pedestrian access to the bridge on Hill Street over the Christina and Eden Park, which received funding for rehabilitation recently.

Slowing and reducing the number of trucks is an important community goal. Many trucks make legal trips through the community but drive at high speed and rattle the houses. The team wants to build off the port access study to implement truck diversions, reduce the number of trucks coming through the community, and go after trucks that are making illegal moves on the side streets. Directing trucks as much as possible to Christiana Avenue was one of the goals.

Better bus connections to jobs and healthy foods are needed. The population is transit dependent here. Over twenty percent of the residents are zero car households. It aligns well with a grant that DART just submitted for areas of persistent poverty, which considers things like access improvements to the ShopRite in south Wilmington, port job access, and shuttle connection to the transit hub. All of those things would be supported by the neighborhood plan. Reactivating the Main Street Program is also recommended. Building off of the streetscape work and working through a reinvigorated CDC will help implement work on such as things as gateway treatments, expanding EV charging infrastructure, mitigation strategies for roads at risk of flooding, and monitoring the Northeast Corridor's future high-speed rail plan for which Amtrak has a concept to use the freight line through Southbridge as the high-speed rail link, which would have significant impacts on the community.

As part of the grant from Healthy Communities Delaware the team sent a memo outlining the need to spend recovery funding in Southbridge to help implement this plan. Southbridge shares a census tract with Christiana Landing and because of that, the data for poverty was skewed and it was not considered one of the hardest hit areas by HUD. This was outlined in the memo which showed Southbridge as a hard-hit area by the pandemic and that recovery funding is absolutely appropriate to spend there. Southbridge does have a CDC that is about to get reinvigorated with staffing support through phase two of the Healthy Communities Delaware grant. The CDC is helping to implement this this plan, and the civic association is starting to

form some action committees based around those seven project areas, including mobility to look at setting up priorities for implementation and begin work on implementing them.

## **16. Townsend Walkable Community Workshop**

Mr. Jake Thompson said Walkable Community Workshops are an opportunity for citizens to become planners as they are experts in their own communities and come up with the best possible ideas for improvement. These workshops consist of three parts. They begin with a presentation going over topics like sidewalk design, crosswalks, traffic calming, and other tools to improve walkability. That gets ideas going for the walking audit where participants survey the area and try to identify issues and opportunities for improving walking. Then, participants return to the meeting location and have a mapping exercise where the group shares their ideas for improving walkability and those ideas go into the report.

The Townsend Walkable Community Workshop took place on July 12<sup>th</sup> at the pavilion in Townsend's Municipal Park. There were eleven people in attendance including residents, town officials, and WILMAPCO staff. It began with a presentation of the elements of a walkable community. Then the group went on a walking audit, which started at the pavilion, took the park path down to a vacant lot next to the park; then took neighborhood streets to Wiggins Mill Road, which was followed to the Townsend Village II housing development. Participants then turned around and returned to the pavilion for the mapping exercise.

During the mapping exercise, the group discussed challenges to walking around town and ideas to improve walkability that they discovered during the walking audit and in their everyday lives. A map of ideas was put together. That map was formalized into a map of recommendations for the report, which covers all the ideas the group came up with including several new paths that would make connections between neighborhoods, to open spaces, and to new developments; several traffic calming measures; a new public open space; filling in sidewalk gaps; and improving crosswalks.

The first idea was a new public open space on Chestnut Street. This would be in a vacant lot adjacent to Townsend Municipal Park. As of now, the only entrance is within a housing development on the west end, which is far from the Main Street business district. This would provide a closer entrance to the park. This lot is clean, well maintained, and frequently used as a shortcut to get to the park. The group recommended that the town acquire this property, which would open up many opportunities for this space including extending the existing park path through the lot and down to Main Street, and adding things like tables, benches, and recreational facilities. The best use of this space should be determined through public outreach.

The next idea was a path on Wiggins Mill Road, which was a major part of the walking audit. High traffic speeds and the lack of sidewalks make this road very dangerous for walking. During the walking audit participants were accompanied by a police escort and wore safety vests, but neither of these should be necessary to feel safe. This path could consist of some combination of a sidewalk, walkable shoulder, or pathway. Further study may be needed. In particular, the road narrows to a one-lane bridge over a culvert. At this location, the path could consist of a wooden bridge attached to the existing bridge, or the path could extend further out to the woods to avoid the culvert entirely. This path would connect the Townsend Village II neighborhood on the north end to Main Street and present opportunities for many new walking routes.

The group recommended several new path connections which would connect more directly between neighborhoods and to open spaces. These include a path into the woods on the north end of town, a path around the pond in the center of town, paths or nature trails that would connect between two neighborhoods between Edgar Road and Wiggins Mill Road, paths into new planned housing developments, and paths into open spaces.

The group recommended several traffic calming measures to make it more comfortable for people walking and biking. Those include mini roundabouts that were recommended at six intersections in town. On Wiggins Mill Road there are two entrances to Townsend Village 2. These could also have mini roundabouts or, alternatively, oval-shaped islands which could calm traffic and could include crosswalks with pedestrian refuge islands. Advisory shoulders are a potential interim solution for Wiggins Mill Road. With advisory shoulders there is just one lane. The center is intended for cars and the shoulders are for walking and biking. Cars enter into the shoulders to allow traffic to pass once they are sure the shoulder is clear. A simpler solution, marked shoulders, are recommended for Edgar Road where there are concerns about speeding traffic. This also helps to calm traffic by narrowing the perceived width of the road. These could include textured pavement, which is more costly, but more effective. Curb extensions or bump-outs were also recommended on Edgar Road to calm traffic, reduce crossing distances, and make pedestrians more visible. There is also discussion about pedestrian-scale lighting which is better for lighting sidewalks and paths than overhead streetlighting. It is a great way to improve public safety and personal comfort. These have already been installed on much of Main Street. In particular, the group recommended these along Helen Drive and Kaitlyn Drive on the west end of town where there were concerns about lack of lighting.

The group discussed two improvements to Main Street. Currently there are no sidewalks from Edgar Road to Cannery Lane on the west end of Main Street so that gap would have to be filled in. In the center of town, the railroad tracks would need a marked crossing. There is an ongoing streetscape improvement project on Townsend's Main Street, Phase 2 of which was completed last year. That included ADA compliant sidewalks, curb ramps, bump-outs, and pedestrian-scale lighting. Phase 3 of that project is pending funding but would stretch from Commerce Street to Kaitlyn Drive and should include both of these improvements.

The next steps section of the report describes how to bring these ideas into reality. First, the town should seek acquisition of the vacant lot on Chestnut Street and perform public outreach to determine the best use of this space. The town should also ensure that the planned Phase 3 Main Street improvements address the before mentioned concerns. The report ends with funding and implementation resources. This report has been reviewed and approved by the Townsend Town Council and has been finalized. It is on our website: [wilmapco.org/walkable](http://wilmapco.org/walkable).

### **INFORMATION ITEMS:**

#### **17. DeIDOT's Administrative Modification Request Letters**

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

The Council adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

### **ATTACHMENTS: (0)**