

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
JANUARY 13, 2022**

The WILMAPCO Council meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. John Sisson, Chair, opened the meeting at 10:01 a.m.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

**Members present:**

David Edgell, Delaware Governor's Appointee  
Herb Inden, representing City of Wilmington Mayor, Michael S. Purzycki  
Michael Kline, representing Cecil County Municipalities  
Heather Murphy, Maryland Governor's Appointee  
Stephen O'Connor, representing Cecil County Executive, Danielle Hornberger  
Antoni Sekowski, representing New Castle County Executive, Matthew Meyer  
John Sisson, representing Delaware Transit Corporation  
Pamela Steinebach, representing DelDOT Secretary of Transportation, Nicole Majeski

**Members absent:**

Eric Thompson, Mayor of Elsmere, representing New Castle County Municipalities

**Guests, Observers:**

Tyson Byrne, MDOT  
Marc Coté, Rossi Group  
James Coverdale, DNREC  
Tom Fruehstorfer, PAC Chair  
David Gilefski  
Amanda Giuttari, DelDOT  
Robert Hicks  
Dan Janousek, MDOT  
Teresa Lord, Pennoni  
Kevin Racine  
Lanie Thornton, DelDOT

**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. Herb Inden seconded by Mr. Stephen O'Connor the Council approved the November 4, 2021, Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion passed with Mr. Michael Kline abstaining.

(01-13-22-01)

### 4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

None.

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

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

Mr. John Sisson said Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC) implemented a modified service today due to absenteeism and vacancy issues with fixed route buses in New Castle County. Twelve routes have a slight service reduction. No route in total has been reduced. DTC hopes to only do this for three to four weeks until they get their staffing back in order. The March 2022 service change has been approved and will go into effect on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

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

Mr. Herb Inden reported that is it all quiet there.

Ms. Heather Murphy said MDOT has a new Secretary. Mr. Jim Ports is the new Secretary for a year, until Maryland's next gubernatorial election where the governor is termed out. This will be an interesting time for him as they start their session.

Mr. Steve O'Connor said Cecil County had a committee complete the first step of the initial review of their comprehensive plan. A report is being put together and will be presented to the County Executive for next steps later this month.

Mr. Antoni Sekowski said the draft of New Castle County's comprehensive plan, NCC@2050 is out for public comment and the public comment period is open until January 31<sup>st</sup>.

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

- Staff moderated a panel discussion on the impact of COVID on planning at the APA Delaware state conference on December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- FHWA's Transportation Planning Capacity Building Initiative will be highlighting the Transportation Justice Plan as an exemplary model for other MPOs and DOTs to follow. Staff also contributed an article about the Transportation Justice Plan to the FHWA's GIS in Transportation newsletter.
- CADSR, which is the Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research, continues to analyze bus connectivity to transportation justice areas as part of a follow-up analysis to the 2019 Transportation Justice Plan. The Transportation Justice Working Group plan to meet in January.
- The first I-95 Cap Feasibility Study Community Visioning Workshop was held in person on November 17<sup>th</sup> with sixty attendees. A follow-up Zoom workshop was held last night also with sixty attendees.

- Concord Pike's initial monitoring committee meeting was a legislative briefing held on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. The actual monitoring committee meeting was held on December 8<sup>th</sup>.
- An in-person City Council Workshop for the City of New Castle Transportation Plan was held on November 9<sup>th</sup>. Staff are preparing for final advisory committee and public meetings.
- WILMAPCO is partnering with the University of Delaware on an NSF grant application entitled "Enhancing Safety, Equity, Accessibility, and Acceptance of Autonomous Sustainable Shuttles for Underserved Populations".
- Staff will be attending the MDOT MTA Statewide Transit Plans Stakeholders Meeting on January 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff is working with Safe Kids Coalition - New Castle County to create a series of safety videos with topics including bicycle and pedestrian safety.
- The Air Quality Partnership is working with Partnership for Delaware Estuary to coordinate Wilmington Earth Day.
- Staff also participated in Clean Cities Coalition meeting, DART Service Change hearings, Climate Action Plan overview, and the I-95 Rehab meetings.
- For the financial report, WILMAPCO has 44% expenditure as of December. Staff will be working on the FY 23 UPWP Planning Agreement with MDOT and DeIDOT and draft outline this month.

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

Mr. Tom Fruehstorfer had technical difficulty with his microphone, so the TAC Report was delivered before the PAC Report. Ms. Heather Dunigan said The TAC met on November 18<sup>th</sup> with no Action Items at that meeting. Ms. Diane Gunn from Century Engineering presented on the Wilmington Transit Corridors Project. Mr. Bill Swiatek presented a draft of the Air Quality Conformity Analysis for the FY 2023 to 2026 TIP.

At the December 16<sup>th</sup> TAC meeting TAC recommended two TIP amendments. One amendment was for additional funding for the Belvidere Road bridge. The second was for paratransit validators for DART. The TAC also recommended the release of the Air Quality Conformity Analysis for public comment and endorsed the Churchman's Crossing Plan without any issues. There were presentations on the Regional Progress Report, the Middletown Walkable Community Workshop, and the TIP Development Process for the FY 2023 TIP.

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

Due to Mr. Fruehstorfer's technical difficulty Ms. Randi Novakoff presented the PAC Report. Ms. Novakoff said the PAC met on December 13<sup>th</sup> with one Action Item, which was the appointment of the PAC Chair Nominating Committee. The committee includes Mr. Mike Kaszyski from the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Tracy Chamblee from Southern New Castle County and Mr. Tom Fruehstorfer. Mr. Matt Rogers of New Castle County presented an overview of the New Castle County Comprehensive Plan, as well as a summary of the public outreach for the plan and the resulting feedback. One PAC member was interested to learn more about how population growth was factored into the plan and where that data can be found. Mr. Dan Blevins presented the Churchman's Crossing Plan Update, during which he reviewed the plan's timeline and the results of the final public workshop. Mr. Blevins also shared the report structure, the conclusions of the report, how the appendices are organized, and where the information can be found on the website, including an interactive map. Finally, he reviewed the next steps, including incorporating the projects into the RTP and TIP, and utilizing a

monitoring committee to guide the implementation and keep the public informed about the plan. There was no additional PAC discussion after this presentation. Mr. Bill Swiatek presented the South Wilmington Neighborhood Plan. Mr. Swiatek described the process for updating the South Wilmington Neighborhood Plan, including the extensive public outreach that was conducted. He also described the phases of the plan, key challenges, transportation recommendations in the plan, and implementation strategies. There was some discussion about how new federal dollars could benefit the area and be utilized to implement the plan.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**9. To Amend the WILMAPCO FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said this amendment is for the Belvidere Road Bridge Project. This was submitted by Cecil County, Maryland and they requested that this existing project be amended to add increased funding for a replacement of the bridge over the CSX track on Belvidere Road. The project cost has about doubled from \$8.6 million to \$17.8 million. The bridge replacement is needed because the new interchange project as well as the industrial park will draw a lot more truck traffic to the area. This was first amended in the TIP a year ago and now that they have gone through the PE Phase, they have a better sense of construction costs.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Stephen O'Connor seconded by Ms. Heather Murphy the Council approved the amendment of the WILMAPCO FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Motion passed.

(01-13-22-02)

**10. To Amend the WILMAPCO FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said this was submitted by DelDOT and is an amendment for a new project that will improve the boarding process for paratransit with paratransit validators. The total cost is about \$1.4 million.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Herb Inden seconded by Mr. Stephen O'Connor the Council approved the amendment of the WILMAPCO FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Motion passed.

(01-13-22-03)

**11. To Release the New Castle County Draft FY 2023-26 TIP Air Quality Conformity Analysis for Public Comment.**

Mr. Bill Swiatek said a Draft Air Quality Conformity Analysis document is ready for review. A major section of it looks at the analysis of VOC and NOx, which are the components of ozone emissions, for the projects in the new TIP. For that analysis, we easily pass the budgets of record for both VOC and NOx. The analysis of direct and indirect PM 2.5 is required in New Castle County, and again we easily pass those budgets. We also have to look at tons per day for PM 2.5, which easily passes those budgets. Work on the Air Quality Conformity Analysis began in the summer and concluded in October. The public release of the document is being delayed to be in step with the TIP. Initially, this was planned to go out for public comment this month, but we will wait for the TIP to be released for public comment and then release this from March to April, then expect Council adoption, along with the TIP in May.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Herb Inden seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council approved the release of the New Castle County Draft FY 2023-26 TIP Air Quality Conformity Analysis for Public Comment.

Motion passed with Mr. Michael Kline abstaining.

(01-13-22-04)

### **12. To Endorse the Draft Churchman's Crossing Plan Update.**

Mr. Dan Blevins said we seek endorsement of the Churchman's Crossing Plan Update. Project updates were presented to Council in November 2020, January 2021, and July 2021. In summary, this plan started as an update to the 1997 plan, complete and being consistent with the new PEL requirements. The plan establishes new or reaffirms the old recommendations from that plan for land use and transportation within the study area. There were four public meetings held. The PAC did not take any action on this at their December meeting, though it was presented, as it was in December 2020 and August 2021. The TAC recommended it for endorsement at their December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mr. Antoni Sekowski said he wanted to extend New Castle County's thanks to everyone for participation in this study update. They look forward to continued coordination as the county and, hopefully, the Council takes the next steps toward the ultimate goal of creating a Transportation Improvement District in that area.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Stephen O'Connor seconded by Mr. Antoni Sekowski the Council endorsed the Draft Churchman's Crossing Plan Update.

Motion passed with Mr. Michael Kline abstaining.

(01-13-22-05)

## **PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

### **13. Draft FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said at this meeting the Council would normally be presented a draft of the 2023 to 2026 TIP to release for public comment, but the schedule is being pushed back a cycle. Last year, as part of the TIP development, prioritization was submitted to DeIDOT and that was approved by Council in May. WILMAPCO had a joint public meeting with DeIDOT in September. DeIDOT took the information from our prioritization as well as public feedback and developed a draft CTP and TIP. They shared that information with us in December. However, in November, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was approved, which will provide much more transportation funding. It was decided to give the State DOTs time to incorporate that funding into their programs before releasing a draft TIP, to avoid releasing the draft knowing additional money will be added and then having to do major amendments. So again, instead of releasing a draft for comment this month and then adopting it in March, staff are proposing the TIP be released for a public comment period from March 18<sup>th</sup> to April 29<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully, a public workshop, most likely in a virtual forum, will be held during this time period. The date for that needs to be determined. Then the TIP, with any comments that were received, would be brought to Council in May for adoption.

From the initial draft provided by DeIDOT, there are three new projects proposed including the Edgemoor Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements between Governor Printz and Hay Road, the Port Area Truck Parking Facility, and the Shared Use Path from South Church Street

to South Walnut Street in Wilmington. The draft presented in December shows 13% less funding than there is in the TIP that was amended in September 2020. There is more money coming because of the Infrastructure and Jobs Act, and a new draft should be available at the end of February. Staff are in the process of working with DeIDOT and MDOT to get new funding information. It is not expected that there will be many new projects, but rather new funds will probably expedite existing projects.

The Infrastructure and Jobs Act includes \$1.2 trillion in spending nationwide, which is \$550 billion above what was in the program. Fifty-two percent of that is for transportation, the remaining is for assorted environmental and infrastructure including broadband, power grid, and water. This will allow projects to be done more quickly, and as the states apply for the grant programs that are part of it, hopefully, there will be new projects. Transportation includes the existing \$293 billion baseline as well as \$274 billion in new funding. Much of that will go to roads and bridges. There is a large increase in funding for rail and transit. New programs include more funding for electric vehicle charging, funds to improve safe routes to communities, projects to reduce fatalities and crashes for vulnerable populations, and funding for projects like the I-95 Cap Project. Both Delaware and Maryland will have a 21% increase in the total FHWA apportionment funds for FY 2022 versus 2021. States are still waiting for the FTA Apportionment Tables, which are expected at the end of this month. There are a number of increases in the various transit programs. The schedule is expected to have a draft released for public comment in March, a workshop in April, brought to PAC and TAC for endorsement in April, and brought to Council for adoption in May.

Ms. Lanie Thornton said that Ms. Dunigan did a great job providing a synopsis of where we are and all the additional levels of funding. Ms. Thornton offered to answer any questions.

Ms. Heather Murphy said MDOT is waiting for the feds and the appropriations bill to make sure that the formula funding comes through. It would be unusual for some of the discretionary stuff come out first, but we will see.

Ms. Dunigan said she knows both states are working as quickly as they can to update their funding. So, we are hoping to keep to the schedule. Everything is in flux so we may have a draft in March and then, as things become clearer in some of the years beyond FY 2022 we will probably see amendments. More funding to get things done quicker is good news, and we are very optimistic about this.

#### **14. 2022 Regional Progress Report**

Mr. Bill Swiatek said this presentation is about the Regional Progress Report, which WILMAPCO continues to work on. A draft of the report is ready for review. The Regional Progress Report is the performance measurement document used at WILMAPCO to track the progress of the Regional Transportation Plan. It helps to prepare an update for the plan, because it goes action by action through qualitative and quantitative indicators to show which ones have made good progress, which ones have made partial progress, and so forth.

Some core trends influence many of the indicators in the report including growth and spending within our Transportation Investment Areas as identified in the RTP. The Center and Core areas, which generally run along the I-95 corridor throughout the region, are places where the most intensive transportation investments are focused. Rural areas are places where preservation projects are preferred rather than major transportation investments, which lead to continued suburban sprawl. In looking at New Castle County household growth experienced

over the past two decades, there is the remarkable growth in New Castle County within the Developing TIA, which is the area North of Middletown and also rural areas, growing by 26%, adding about 3,000 new households. In Cecil County much of the growth has been centered within the Core, with 41% of the growth between 2000 and 2020, which amounts to about 3,800 new households. Projections of growth between now and 2050 are available. In New Castle County the trend shows the highest rate of growth being in Rural and Developing areas continues, projecting a 31% increase in households within rural areas in New Castle County, and Developing is going to grow about 70%. Cecil County is more balanced with a 40% increase within Core and 42% within Communities. This relates to transportation when it is connected to the spending in our TIPs between 2004 and 2020 and compared to the share of projected households within the different TIAs. The growth within the Developing and Rural areas outpaced what is expected in terms of households within those places in 2050 so Developing received 17% and Rural 19% of the spend between 2004 and 2020 TIP. Meanwhile, Core areas got about 40% of the spend but are expected to make up just over half of the households within the region by 2050.

Another key core trend is how people are travelling to work, whether driving, taking the bus, or other modes. In the last forty years the increase of people driving alone to work makes up about 80% of commutes. These are pre-pandemic numbers, so it will be interesting to see the post-pandemic census data. Of course, there will probably be an increase in those who work from home, but it will be interesting to see if the other modes have changed as well. Another core trend is vehicle miles traveled. The VMT by households is a per capita measure. Cecil County and New Castle County can be compared with the U.S. average, and both counties outpaced the U.S. average in terms of VMT. There have been declines at different times with VMT, but the last couple of years pre-pandemic saw an increase. Delaware just released its climate action plan, which is calling for a 10% reduction in VMT between now and 2030.

In the progress report, each of the actions in the RTP is assigned a red light to indicate poor progress, yellow light to indicate partial or mixed progress, or green indicating good progress. In the 2018 iteration, there was good progress on 50% of the actions and the draft results for 2022 show 60% of the actions have green lights. So, we are doing a better job of implementing the RTP now than in the last Progress Report. For example, one action is to create and support the implementation of sub-regional plans in the region. One of the strengths of our MPO is that we put together a lot of sub-regional plans, like the Churchman's Crossing Plan and the plans are being implemented. Using a rating system from P0, which is no implementation, to P5 which is the plan has been implemented, the majority of WILMAPCO plans since 1996 are P1-P4, which means at least some of the recommendations in the sub-regional plans were completed. Only 14% of the plans that WILMAPCO had since 1996 have seen no implementation.

One of the other core measures is funding transportation choices, which looks at TIP trends since 1997 to see the mix of projects in the TIP. Over the past decade there has been a decline in roadway-only projects. Projects are becoming much more multimodal and consider different users in the project itself.

Another measure looks at ensuring access to public transportation. This measure calculates the population living near bus stops in both counties over the past two decades. In New Castle County, the percentage of people who live near bus stops declined from 55% to 45%. In Cecil County there was a slight increase in people living near bus stops between 2000 and 2020 from 3% to 8%. This is how land use is related to transportation. We want to see an increase in this number and not decrease.

Another action is improving safety for people walking, which is tied to a national performance measure requiring us to show the total non-motorized injuries and fatalities. It is a statewide measure that both states and MPOs adopt if they agree with it, which we do. The 2020 target for numbers of fatalities and injuries from non-motorized is going to be difficult for both states to meet, given the recent increases in numbers in Maryland and slight decreases in Delaware with total non-motorized injuries and fatalities. Another action item is the completion of a low-stress non-motorized transportation network, which shows the completed and funded segments of the East Coast Greenway in New Castle County. In 2011, 68% of the network was completed. There is good progress with 86% completed today. Cecil County has not seen as much progress with the East Coast Greenway, with 8% of the of the system completed or funded. Another action item is related to median trail count. This is a new measure in New Castle County because of the availability of walking data on the trails now. We looked at the median trail count in New Castle County in May. There was a slight increase between 2017 and 2019 from just over one thousand users. The count really spiked extremely high during the coronavirus lockdown in May 2020. That number has come down but is about double what we saw pre-pandemic indicating that people are using those trails for recreation and transportation. Another action item related to this measure looks at walking and biking commutes. Particularly, we looked at the mode of choice to work. The walk commutes have declined over the past several decades in the region. New Castle County has seen a slight increase between the beginning part of the last decade and the end from 2.3% to 2.4%. Cecil County has seen a decrease from 2% to 1%. Biking commutes also show a slight increase in New Castle County over the past decade and a slight decrease in Cecil County.

The next steps are to review the draft document, which is available. Council members are asked to let staff know if they would like to have anything updated or have other sources of data. Staff are looking for Council action on this document in March. TAC will see a presentation of it next week, and then review and approve of the document after that.

Mr. Swiatek posted in the chat: Draft Regional Progress Report –  
<https://wilmapco.sharefile.com/share/view/s19dff10d2cf44d6eb18d0fe7683aea36>

### **15. Middletown Walkable Community Workshop**

Mr. Jake Thompson said walkable community workshops are an opportunity for citizens to become planners as they are experts in their community and can 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 to improve walking. Then, participants return to the meeting location for a mapping exercise where the group shares their ideas for improving walkability and those ideas go into the report.

The Middletown Walkable Community Workshop took place on September 29<sup>th</sup> at the town hall. There were thirteen people in attendance, including residents, town officials, and WILMAPCO staff. The walking audit started at the town hall and proceeded in a loop around downtown Middletown on Broad Street, Lake Street, Cox Street, and Main Street. During the mapping exercise the group split into two smaller groups and shared their ideas on maps. Those maps were then formalized into a map of recommendations for the report covering all the ideas that group proposed, which include a mixed-use walking and biking path network, improving sidewalks and crossings, creating new open spaces, and making several improvements to Main Street. The proposed walking and biking path network suggested by the group includes



connections between several destinations in town, as well as provides a potential connection to Townsend just a few miles to the south. These paths would enhance the safety, convenience, and accessibility for people walking and biking.

In particular, the group took a closer look at Lake Street. This street is wide and underutilized, and its sidewalks are narrow, incomplete, and in disrepair. The group recommended a road diet on Lake Street, which could include things like sidewalk upgrades and a mixed-use path. The town has a planned extension to Lake Street, which should incorporate these improvements as well. Next, we turned down Cox Street. This is a narrow street that lacks sidewalks and functions like an alley. Due to low traffic speed and volumes, it is generally comfortable and safe to walk in the street. The group recommended making improvements to turn this into a shared street which would then function as part of the proposed mixed-use path network. This could include features like textured pavement, benches, and planters to make a more inviting walking atmosphere. The group also recommended creating new public open space on the east side of Cox Street. This would require property acquisition. Alternatively, the town could work within the existing right-of-way to make these improvements. The group also recommended several sidewalk improvements on Lake Street, Catherine Street, and Broad Street. In particular there is one section on Broad Street that has been uplifted by tree roots, and repairs should always be done without displacing trees. At a minimum, sidewalks should be continuous, free of obstructions, and meet ADA standards, but they can be further enhanced by things like greenery and benches.

The group also recommended several crossing improvements, including adding crosswalks on Main Street at Cox Street, the railroad crossing, and Haveg Road and Peterson Road, as well as at Broad Street and Shallcross Place; and implementing raised crosswalks in the center of town at Broad and Main Streets, one block south of that at Broad and Green, and on Main Street at the Everett Theatre, which would be a mid-block, raised crosswalk. These would help fill in long gaps between crossings on Main Street, make more safe places to cross the street, and further help to calm traffic.

The group also recommended creating a new public park. This would be located at the vacant lot at the corner of Main and Catherine Streets. This is located at the east end of the Main Street business district and is directly across the street from the future site of the Southern New Castle County Library, which is currently under construction. This lot is currently owned by Bayhealth Medical Center, whose building is located next door, so it would require property acquisition or coordination with Bayhealth to develop the park there. This could include features that would be mutually beneficial to patrons of Main Street businesses, the library, and the medical center, such as benches, tables, a plaza, and paths connecting through the park. The group also recommended several improvements to Main Street, including things like adding flowerpots and lane markings, standardizing signage for downtown businesses, improving lighting in alleys, improving facades, and supporting redevelopment. This could bring a lot of benefits to the corridor including improving the comfort and safety of walking, helping to calm traffic, enhancing the sense of place, and helping to support local businesses.

The next step section of the report gets into how to bring these ideas into reality. First, the town should ensure that the planned extension to Lake Street as well as improvements to Cox Street incorporate the recommendations in this report. The town should also seek acquisition of the lot at Main and Catherine Streets or coordinate with Bayhealth to develop a park there. The report ends with information on funding and implementation resources. This report will soon be available on our website, [wilmapco.org/walkable](http://wilmapco.org/walkable).

## **16. Union Street Reconfiguration Streetscape Improvement Study**

Mr. Dave Gula said outreach for this study has been targeted to neighborhood groups, community advocates, and property and business owners along the corridor. City and state elected officials have been included and they provided good feedback. Wilmington Initiatives is being used for project team meetings. The focus for outreach has been with the community groups and businesses along the corridor, because they will be most affected by what is proposed. At the last workshop on October 27<sup>th</sup>, information received through surveys was presented and participants were asked questions about their relationship to Union Street, including what they do when they go there, how close they are, if they can walk there, and how they get there. Sixty-one people participated through the workshop and survey.

Different segments of this roadway look and feel different. Many people like the outdoor dining that became a practice in response to COVID and it has thrived even when COVID restrictions were relaxed in the summer. When asked about what is already there, angled parking comes up as most hated by some people, while others really like it. The bike lane is dangerous because it is not separated from traffic and the speeds on the roadway are high. People say the intersection at Pennsylvania Avenue is dangerous and confusing. This intersection has a new configuration with a new signal that helps with pedestrian movements, so hopefully the way that segment is labeled will be changing. Better crossings are needed throughout the corridor. Reducing speed is important and is brought up by the public frequently. Hopefully, the project will foster a Main Street feel and areas where people are not comfortable walking or biking will improve. There were many comments about driving, walking, biking, riding the bus, and parking along Union Street. The top three improvements people want to see are support for businesses and growth, improvement in the appearance of the street, and easier and safer walking. People also want to see tree cover, green spaces, and an improved public transit experience.

The Purpose and Needs Statement was drafted and presented to the advisory committee and then to the public. The purpose is to transform Union Street into a Main Street corridor that supports the multimodal mobility and connectivity needs of the local business community and the residents of the surrounding area. The needs are transportation and streetscape improvements along Union Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and Sycamore Street to better function as a Main Street corridor, balancing moving cars and functioning as a place for residents and neighbors to shop, dine, work, recreate, socialize, and play, and also to improve the multimodal mobility and connectivity. When asked in both the workshop and on the survey that followed, people agreed with the purpose and need but want to make sure that pedestrian and biking safety is emphasized over car movements.

Based on the purpose and need, measures of effectiveness were created to evaluate the alternatives. Everything points back to better functioning as a Main Street and not just a way for cars to get out of the city as fast as possible. There were a set of alternatives that did not move the curb lines. Those alternatives did not meet any of the goals that are in the criteria for measures of effectiveness, and those were dropped from consideration. Seven alternatives moved the curb to some level, meaning the road surface was narrowed from what is there now. Of these alternatives, people prefer alternatives A and B. The other alternatives do not meet the needs related to pedestrians, street beautification, and allowing pedestrians and bikes to move around the corridor comfortably. Alternative A narrows the pavement. Within the forty-six feet of pavement would be a raised bike lane on the east side of the road, but it is buffered from both pedestrians and parked cars. Parking will continue to be on the street, but it will be parallel parking. Alternative A shows the utilities undergrounded. This was not something the public was looking for at the beginning of the process, but it came up as we were working with the

consultant teams. Though 70% of the people like alternative A, the challenge is that it is going to be much more expensive than any of the other alternatives. Some comments from the public specifically called for underground utilities, but utility undergrounding is not going to be included as part of a transportation project. Transportation funds in Delaware are not used to underground utilities. It could be as much as a million dollars per pole line, per block. With pole lines on both sides of the block, that around two million dollars per block for sixteen blocks. That really raises the cost of the project and also is very time consuming. Some people did say to do it all at once and get it right, but what really came through for both of these alternatives was the space for pedestrians and outdoor dining on the street, which has become popular with the public. Some of those outdoor dining spaces are currently in the parking lane, which is concerning because the speeds on the roadway are still very high. Narrowing the lanes hopefully will calm traffic through this area.

Alternative B is different in that the utility pole lines remain, and the bike lane is moved to the west side of the street. The team will be working with the bus stops to make sure there is no conflict between bicycle riders and transit users. The only things that people disliked for this alternative was that they wanted two-way bike lanes and they wanted to bury the utilities. Again, we talked about the cost of that. In terms of a two-way bike lane, bikes are not the most important piece of this for the people who answered the survey and came to the workshops. They are the secondary piece. The pedestrian space, the outdoor dining space, and safer crosswalks are the things that are the most important to residents. Also, one block to the west, Bancroft Parkway is a calmer street where people can bike in both directions. A bike lane is needed on Union Street, and it does meet the city's bike plan, but we do not think two-way bike traffic is needed on this roadway.

These are the two top alternatives, and it needs to be determined if both or just one of these will move forward for more analysis. The team will assess the feasibility of a preferred concept or concepts and prepare the final report. There will be a meeting with the advisory committee once the preferred concepts have gone through the analysis. A final public meeting will also occur before the final report is submitted. When asked what else the team should know, people mentioned the challenge of existing parking. We are not sure we can solve the need for parking especially during events. There are a few lots along there that could be consolidated. This is something that city has to look at. Another consideration is that the parking is not metered or timed, so people can park there all day, which is fine in the residential area of the street, but we want turnover on the commercial areas of the street. Improving the pedestrian experience is the key for the street and for the success of this study.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS:**

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

Mr. Robert Hicks asked about the Newark Rail Station. Obviously, it is built on the one side and the times Mr. Hicks has been over there, he has not seen it actually open and used yet. He asked if there is a plan for when they are going to open or if we are just waiting for the pandemic to end. Mr. Hicks said that he understood the original plan was to have a walkway across the tracks to the southbound side and he wondered if that was still in the plan and if so, what the timing might be. Mr. John Sisson replied that the station is open. The building is typically only open during the time SEPTA trains are serving the building, so it is open and being used. The next phase of the project calls for the movement of some freight tracks and some other tracks and the creation of a high-level platform between two tracks and a pedestrian bridge to connect it. It does not connect all the way over to the historic station, but it is supposed to connect to a

high-level platform. Those designs and work are still going on in coordination with Amtrak. Mr. Hicks asked for clarification that this is on the south side. Mr. Sisson responded the station buildings are on the southern side of the tracks. We are not doing anything on the northern side, where the historic train station is, but the tracks will serve both sides of the high-level platform when completed. Mr. Hicks said he is usually over there for Amtrak service, and he often would not have the train station as it is now available to him. So, he guesses what they are really doing is during rush hours when it is mostly open and staffed. Mr. Sisson said the intent when the project is complete is to have some midday service there. The pandemic has really changed that approach, but the long-term goal is to have more commuter trains serving the station.

Mr. Kevin Racine said he just wants to let people know in Delaware that he used to transfer to Cecil County in Delaware. He used to live up by Pennsylvania Avenue. If there is anybody that wants to ask him questions about what is happening, people that are moving into his area are very much interested in knowing that information. Mr. Racine is in Harford County, and he used transit to Cecil County and Delaware, but there is an influx of people from Philadelphia, Delaware and New Jersey and they want to know what is happening. If anybody wants to talk with him, he will be more than willing to explain it. Mr. Sisson said he knows Maryland was studying MARC service into Delaware, but he has not seen the final report. Delaware Transit and Cecil County do coordinate on a bus service between Cecil County and Newark. Mr. Racine said there are people from New Jersey and Philadelphia who want to get back home, but they did not know that they could use the transportation system to get there from his area. There are a lot of people that are coming down to his area now and they want to know how to get around back home and get family members down there.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Dave Edgell seconded by Ms. Heather Murphy the Council adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

Motion passed.

(01-13-22-06)

**ATTACHMENTS: (0)**