

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
JANUARY 17, 2023**

The WILMAPCO Council meeting was held at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, DE 19713 and virtually via Zoom.

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

2. ROLL CALL:

Members present:

John Sisson, representing Delaware Transit Corporation
Tyson Byrne representing Heather Murphy, Maryland Governor's Appointee
David Edgell, Delaware Governor's Appointee
Michael Kline, representing Cecil County Municipalities
Stephen O'Connor, representing Cecil County Executive, Danielle Hornberger
Antoni Sekowski, representing New Castle County Executive, Matthew Meyer
Pamela Steinebach, representing DeIDOT Secretary of Transportation, Nicole Majeski
Eric Thompson, Mayor of Elsmere, representing New Castle County Municipalities

Members absent:

Timothy Lucas, representing City of Wilmington Mayor, Michael S. Purzycki

Guests, Observers:

James Coverdale, DNREC
Mike Kaszyski, PAC Chair
Deanna Murphy, Cecil County Board of Realtors
Rashad Pinckney, MDOT
Kevin Racine, Citizen
Catherine Salarano, MDE

Staff members:

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner
Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
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 Ms. Pamela Steinebach seconded by Mayor Michael Kline the Council approved the November 10, 2022, Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion passed

(01-17-23-01)

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

None.

COUNCIL MEMBERS' AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

5. Chairperson's Report:

Mr. John Sisson said DTC began the process for their May Service change. In New Castle County, public hearings will be February 15th at the Newark Municipal Building from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., and at the Wilmington Library on February 16th from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Part of that proposal is discussion about replacing UniCity in Newark with a micro transit service. They will be taking public comment on that change and discussing some changes around on-time performance and other routing changes.

Council Member's Reports:

None

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

- Southbridge Transportation Action Plan held a youth engagement event for fourth, fifth and sixth grades on December 8th.
- Staff attended the Winter Freight Meeting on December 7th in Dover.
- Staff attended the USDOT Best Practices event on outreach training on December 7th.
- The Bayard Safe Route to School team met on December 12th.
- The Newport Transportation Study Monitoring Committee meeting was held on December 14th.
- Staff attended the Riverfront Development Corporation South Bank public meeting on December 14th.
- The kickoff meeting for the Safe Streets for All Plan for New Castle County was on January 10th.
- Staff attended a public workshop about the Townsend Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan on January 4th.
- The Route 9 Monitoring Committee is scheduled to meet on January 19th.
- The Ardens Transportation Plan Steering Committee is scheduled to meet on February 15th.
- Staff will be presenting our transportation climate vulnerability work at the University of Pennsylvania class on January 30th.
- Staff are continuing to support Collaborate Northeast Transportation Workgroup.
- Staff continue to meet with agency partners for the US 202 Corridor monitoring and the Churchmans Crossing monitoring efforts.
- Staff will participate in the Amtrak Long-Distance Service study on February 3rd in D.C.
- The Our Town event is scheduled for February 8th between 4 and 7 p.m. at the Embassy Suites in Newark.
- Staff will participate in DelDOT's Winter Workshop scheduled for February 13th in Dover.
- Staff will provide bike and pedestrian safety information at the Downes Family Fun Night on February 23rd.
- Staff will resubmit the Twelfth Street Connector Project for the RAISE Grant
- The Title 6 Compliance Review by Federal Highway Administration, Delaware Division, has been completed. Staff have prepared responses to their comments.

- Regarding the December financial report, we have expended about 45% of the budget.
- Staff are working on the FY 2024 UPWP. Letters will be submitted to municipalities and local governments seeking projects that they would like to see in the next UPWP.
- The preliminary FY 2022 audit report is available. There were no findings on our financial statements or federal awards, nor were there any findings last year. Once it is finalized, an electronic copy of the report will be sent to Council members, funding agencies, and Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations.

7. Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Report:

Mr. Mike Kaszyski said the PAC met on December 12th. At that meeting, staff organized Christmas dinner for members. The Executive Director gave her report. There was one action item, which was the recommendation for the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan: 2023 Update be released for public comment. The Executive Director presented the public outreach and the community meetings that were held. There were questions. Then, the PAC unanimously recommended releasing the plan for public comment. There were three presentations. The first was the Ardens Transportation Plan during which walking areas and things like HAWK signals came up in discussion. The Southbridge Transportation Plan was presented. The Statewide Truck Parking Study was discussed as truck parking is a concern in many areas, especially in Southbridge where there is residential community and industrial usage. The need for parking for trucks off site so we are not intermixing in a community and some trail connections were discussed. Mr. Dave Gula presented an I-95 Cap project update, which is an interesting project, if it comes to fruition.

8. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Report:

Ms. Heather Dunigan said the TAC met on November 17th. There was one action item. The TAC recommended approval of the amendment to the TIP to include funding for Transit Vehicle Replacement for hydrogen buses and charging infrastructure. There were five presentations including the DeIDOT Pedestrian Action Plan, the Ardens Walkable Community Workshop, the Ardens Transportation Plan, the Southbridge Transportation Action Plan, and the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan Update. At the December 15th meeting, the TAC recommended releasing both the Air Quality Conformity and Draft RTP for a public comment period. They recommended adoption of the Safety Performance Measures that were provided by MDOT and DeIDOT for transit safety targets. They also recommended endorsement of the I-95 Cap Feasibility Study.

ACTION ITEMS:

9. To Amend the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Heather Dunigan said that DeIDOT and DTC have requested that WILMAPCO amend the TIP to include an \$11 million project for Transit Vehicle Replacement to purchase four hydrogen buses and charging infrastructure for New Castle County in FY 2025. No conformity analysis was triggered by this, the TAC recommended approval, and staff recommends approval.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Stephen O’Connor seconded by Mayor Eric Thompson the Council amended the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Motion passed.

(01-17–23-02)

10. To Release the Draft 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and FY 2023-2026 TIP Air Quality Conformity Determination for Public Comment

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said every time the long-range plan is updated, it triggers a conformity determination for both counties. Both DeIDOT and MDOT have participated in the development of the document with the Air Quality Subcommittee, MDE, and DNREC. Council is asked to release the Conformity Determination for an official public outreach comment period consistent with the RTP from January 18th to March 6th. The TAC and Air Quality Subcommittee both recommended releasing it. Staff is also recommending releasing the documents. This will also be highlighted at the Our Town event which is scheduled for February 8th.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Eric Thompson seconded by Mr. Tyson Byrne the Council released the Draft 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and FY 2023-2026 TIP Air Quality Conformity Determination for Public Comment

Motion passed.

(01-17-23-03)

11. To Release the Draft 2050 RTP for Public Comment.

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said staff began the long-range plan update in the summer. The draft document is now ready to be released for a public comment period. WILMAPCO staff had the opportunity to meet with most Council members and their staff to go over the draft document. Based on these meetings, changes to the draft RTP were received. Many of the comments that were received from member agencies were accommodated. There are a couple of things that we are not able to change, for example explore access to future residential/marina east of the Northeast Corridor rail through adjacent Linde property; the Route 9 neighborhood path network; changes on the DeIDOT columns from “Short-term: Summer 2023” and “Longer-term: 2024 & Beyond”; and we did not add SR 2 and SR 7 or Churchmans Road Extension to the constrained list as these have not been modeled for air quality conformity. These changes would be accommodated not necessarily through the RTP, but when the next TIP is put together. The PAC and TAC voted to release the draft RTP for public comment. Staff recommends the Council release it for public comment period as well. Between now and the March Council meeting, which is when it will be presented for adoption, staff intends to work with the member agencies to accommodate what we can.

Ms. Pamela Steinebach said she wanted it officially on the record that DeIDOT is good with the RTP with the stipulation that we will meet a few more times through the comment period to work out the long-range project list and make it more aligned with both DeIDOT and WILMAPCO’s needs. She thanked the group, the WILMAPCO team, the DeIDOT team, and the DART team for working so hard to get this to fruition, but with the caveat that we will be making some amendments to it, and probably submit that in May.

Mr. Antoni Sekowski said he appreciates WILMAPCO presenting the plan, walking through the projects that are outlined in the plan, and the additional funding source outline for Vision-Zero related goals. New Castle County Land Use will be bringing forth comments on the plan. He wanted to mention that as part of the release of the plan they will have some additional comments.

Ms. Pamela Steinebach said she appreciates the willingness to work together and the good conversations that we have had, and she thinks that it has been a great process.

Mr. Stephen O'Connor asked if the presented list is a working list that will not be released with draft. Ms. Zegeye said that is correct. Staff can compile comments. Then, at the March Council meeting, staff will have changes that were made in the document. This is a working document for the staff.

Mr. John Sisson asked what the deadline is to make sure all the agencies provide their comments in time to make the adjustments, so when the TAC gets it, we do not delay the process. It is really important to make sure that whether it is DeIDOT, New Castle County, Cecil County, MDOT, or whatever they submit their comments in time to make the adjustments. Ms. Zegeye said a week before the TAC meeting which is February 9th would be good to get all comments from member agencies. Mr. Sisson said this is a lot of information. It takes a lot of eyes to make sure we are all on the same page and moving forward. Ms. Zegeye said she appreciates that comment, and really appreciates the TAC members coming prepared after reviewing with their respective Council members to vote. Sometimes there is a discrepancy between the Council members and the TAC members, which puts staff in an awkward position.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Stephen O'Connor seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council released the Draft 2050 RTP for public comment.

Motion passed.

(01-17-23-04)

12. To Adopt the WILMAPCO Safety Performance Measures for Cecil County and New Castle County.

Mr. Dan Blevins said we are looking to adopt the transit safety performance targets set for New Castle County, Delaware and Cecil County, Maryland. These are part of the overall transportation performance effort mandated by the Federal Highway Administration. Targets are total fatalities, fatal rate, injury and injury rate, safety, total safety events, and event rate, and that is all per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles, and also system reliability. These are set by DTC and Cecil Transit. WILMAPCO has one hundred and eighty days to respond whether to accept them or adopt our own. We choose to keep them as is. The TAC approved these at their December meeting.

ACTION: On motion by Mayor Eric Thompson seconded by Mr. Tyson Byrne the Council adopted the WILMAPCO Safety Performance Measures for Cecil County and New Castle County.

Motion passed.

(01-17-23-05)

13. To Endorse the I-95 Cap Feasibility Study

Mr. Dave Gula said the last workshop was November 17th with fifty people in attendance. Many comments were received. To review, the advisory committee was made up of the community members including representation from many of the nearby neighborhoods. The advisory committee had two virtual meetings and three in-person meetings, which were held within a few blocks of the project area to make it convenient for local residents to attend. For community outreach, there was one virtual workshop and four in-person, which were held within the project area, so that in an area considered to be tech descent, residents could more easily attend. Presentations were made at United Neighbors meetings, West Center City Civic Group meetings, Hedgeville Neighborhood Group, the Westminster Presbyterian Church, and the Wilmington Rotary Club. The team attended community events at William "Hicks" Anderson,

United Neighbors bridge mural painting events, and wherever they could raise awareness of the project.

The final design concept was presented on November 17th. The graphic work Hargreaves and Jones and JMT did is outstanding. The graphics show different perspectives, provide a sense of the scale of the project, and how much space is available. The final traffic analysis was also presented. As part of the design, the team is talking about closing bridges to vehicular traffic at 7th Street and 9th Street to increase the amount of green space without traffic passing through it. This also helps divide the project when considering how to potentially phase the project. The team wanted to make sure that closing two bridges would not have an adverse effect on traffic flow through the area. Traffic calming measures were considered on North Jackson Street and North Adam Street. On North Adams Street traffic calming may end at 8th or 9th Streets, because of the ramps there. Preliminary traffic analysis determined that these changes can be made, and with signal timing changes, traffic will move through the area. This may be revisited as the project goes through the design process, and a more in-depth traffic analysis may be done. If lanes are removed in these areas, a parking lane may be added. Both the traffic calming, and bridge closures can be modeled in the real world with temporary closures to see the impacts. The potential structure of the cap was presented. There are two concepts. Neither impacts the lanes or available shoulders of I-95. The closed concept builds retaining walls at the edges of the shoulders and uses fill dirt to reduce the amount of pavement the cap structure needs to span. The beams could be shorter, and the fill allows for deeper planting. This creates more of a tunnel effect, and we have to be aware of the impact of that as we move forward with design. The open concept looks more like the bridges that are over I-95 now. Both concepts are feasible, and the goal of the study was to see if it is feasible. The decking might be steel girders or concrete girders, and they would be spread out in a way that creates areas for in-depth tree plantings, by increasing the amount of space between the cap and the support structure underneath it. That is how larger trees could be planted.

To get an estimate of cost, the team looked at similar work around the country, especially in Texas, because there are similarities between this project and what was done at Clyde Warren Park and other places in Texas. This is an expensive project, but the team broke it into phases. Phase one was recommended to the south, because that area currently has the least access to green space. The other phases can be determined as design moves forward. The final comments received at the workshop involved stormwater management, and one gentleman still wants a flyover ramp to get to the Riverfront. There were many questions about who will pay for this and how. The TAC recommended endorsing the study. This was presented to the PAC, who took no action. This was presented to the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group. It was presented to the City of Wilmington through Wilmington Initiatives a number of times and received positive comments and support. Since the TAC recommended to endorse, six more comments were received. Healthy Communities Delaware wholeheartedly supports the project. A resident expressed concerns about the traffic analysis. While we are confident that it is feasible, the traffic analysis requires more work. Another resident wrote in support of the cap. Another resident has concerns about the layout of the bike lanes as proposed, which is something that can be looked at in design. Another resident is not in support, because it seems very expensive and extravagant for the city that is so poor. Another comment was concerned about a lane reduction on Adams Street as so many ambulances come through that area on their way to Wilmington Hospital. That will be considered as the final analysis goes forward. The staff recommend that Council endorse the feasibility report. If it is endorsed, this process is given to DelDOT. WILMAPCO is a partner, but we do not know what our role will be as it moves forward. This is a very large project, but feasible if the funding is found.

Mr. John Sisson said this project took place during the I-95 shut down and the pandemic, so the traffic analysis was kind of impossible with I-95 shut down and the beginning of the pandemic. The traffic patterns have really changed so they would have to be redone. Mr. Gula said the team looked at historic numbers, pre-pandemic, and pre-I-95 shutdown. One of the things that was seen during the analysis was that there was more traffic because the ramps had been closed when the traffic analysis was done, and everybody was using Adams and Jackson to get on and off of the highway. We need to look at it again once things have settled. That is part of the design process, too. Mr. Sisson said DeIDOT is interested in looking at a pre-phase one closing down the bridges and traffic calming to get it started. Mr. Gula said that should be great, because he thinks the neighborhood would appreciate that work ahead of time.

Ms. Pamela Steinebach asked if the maintenance would be done by Wilmington for all of the hardscaping and softscaping. Mr. Gula said that was discussed but is not determined yet. The City of Wilmington has not said that they would be willing to make this a city park. There was a lot of conversation that perhaps this is more of a state park, which is when DNREC would be brought in. There are lots of ways we can go with this. Mr. Sisson said they might consider creating another RDC or something like that, another group that could potentially manage this.

Mr. Tyson Byrne asked if the team looked at what the life cycle of it is, because it is basically a bridge. He also asked if they looked at the continuing maintenance or other costs of maintaining not just the top, but the deck layers, and if they have an estimate of how long this is supposed to last before major renovations are needed, or any of the life cycle cost of this cap. Mr. Gula said that was not discussed in any great detail. The team met with DeIDOT's Bridge Section to have a conversation about not only the open and closed style, but also how to maintain and inspect it. DeIDOT is starting to think about that now, and it is a large part of the conversation going forward. The Bridge Section made many comments about the project, and the team will go back to them to make sure that is part of their consideration. This is a large project, and with the amount of money spent to build it, you have to invest the money to maintain it.

Mr. Stephen O'Connor said he was curious about the process, and it sounds like people have a lot of details they are concerned about. As he understands it, the next immediate step will be DeIDOT exploring this a little bit more. He asked if there were any particular items they would be looking at next, or that Mr. Gula would recommend they look at next. Mr. Gula said the next step in the process would be to go through the NEPA studies, where you look at the environmental impact. It is over I-95, so in terms of pure environmental, it is probably not impactful, but you have to think about stormwater management with a project such as this and the impact on the community. As you are doing NEPA, you are doing preliminary engineering and getting into details. Mr. O'Connor asked if, with that process, they expect it to be another year to two years. Mr. Gula said the estimate from the consultant team was probably two or more years for design, and then two or more years for construction. So, if you started right now, it might be finished in five years. Mr. O'Connor questioned if it is programmed yet. Mr. Gula said it is not programmed yet. Mr. Sisson said we wanted to do this study to see it feasible. Then you make some decisions based on the cost too. It is a lot of money. Mr. Gula said the three phases are not necessarily dependent on one another. The phase that is recommended to be phase one has an amphitheater with restrooms. Phase three is projected to have an area that could be a cafe with restrooms. The central section did not show any programming for restrooms. A park this large probably needs restrooms, so phase one could stand alone for a while if necessary. Mr. Sisson said he thinks a lot will also depend on what type of federal funding is available.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Stephen O'Connor seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council endorsed the I-95 Cap Feasibility Study.

Motion passed.

(01-17-23-06)

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said this was submitted as a feasibility study from DeIDOT, DTC and the City of Wilmington, so we have done our part to put together a feasibility study. Our next step is to put all the comments together and submit the final report to the agencies who submitted the request. There is a huge interest at the Washington delegation level, the Governor's office, and others. So, really, it would be up to them to take it to the next phase.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

14. Charlestown 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. These workshops consist of three parts. They begin with a presentation, going over topics such as sidewalk design, crosswalks, traffic calming, and other tools to improve walkability. That gets ideas going for the walking audit, where the participants survey the area and try to identify issues and opportunities to improve walking. After the walking audit, the group returns to the meeting location for a mapping exercise, where they share their ideas for improving walkability, and those ideas are documented in the report. Charlestown is located between Perryville and North East along the Route 40 corridor and Northeast Corridor railroad in Cecil County. It is home to about 1,500 people. It is perhaps best known for its many waterfront amenities including its public boat ramp, marina, pier, waterfront parks, beaches, and a campground.

The Charlestown Walkable Community Workshop took place on Wednesday, October 12th, at the Charlestown Fire Company. There were about fourteen people in attendance in addition to staff. For the walking audit, the group began at the intersection of Market and Bladen Streets, in the center of town. They took a loop around town on Market, Cecil, and Baltimore Streets, along the waterfront, and across the pedestrian bridge in Foot Log Park. The group suggested improvements which include, among many other ideas, intersection improvements, sidewalk additions and widening, pedestrian-scale lighting, and trail connections. It was noted that a couple of intersections have a wide, sweeping turning radius. They are just designed to move traffic quickly. It is not safe for pedestrians, especially those who need to cross. The group recommended redesigning both of these intersections to meet at a right angle. In addition to the redesign, the group recommended stop signs in both directions, removing the guard rail, and adding a direct connection to the Charlestown Athletic Complex. At Cecil and Baltimore, in addition to the redesign, the group recommended crosswalks with rectangular rapid flashing beacons, which would be especially helpful for children and parents walking to Charlestown Elementary School. At the center of town, the intersection of Market and Bladen Streets also has a sweep which can be confusing for drivers and pedestrians especially if they need to cross to get to the town hall, the post office, and park. The group recommended redesigning this intersection at a right angle with a mini roundabout that would include a center island, which would be a great opportunity for beautification or placemaking, such as a "Welcome to Charlestown" sign. At this intersection, the group noticed some sign clutter and recommended consolidating these onto one pole with wayfinding elements.

The group also recommended widening several sidewalks around town, making sure they are at least six feet wide, and filling in any sidewalk gaps on Market, Bladen, Cecil, and Baltimore Streets, as well as along Old Philadelphia Road, and adding pedestrian-scale lighting. Most streets in Charleston's core lack sidewalks. They are, for the most part, very narrow which leads

to low traffic speeds and volumes, making them generally comfortable and safe to walk on alongside traffic. However, sidewalks and pedestrian-scale lighting were desired on many of these downtown streets. If that is not feasible or is considered cost prohibitive, advisory shoulders could be a good alternative solution. This is a lane restriction where there is one center lane for drivers and shoulders are intended for walking and biking. It is a great way to delineate space for walking and biking where there is limited right-of-way. Drivers would have to yield to anyone using the shoulder to allow oncoming traffic to pass. A few trail connections were recommended, which roughly follow the existing street grid on public right-of-way. These would connect destinations, including from the Charlestown Elementary School and the athletic complex. That could connect to a trail along Peddler's Run, as well as the trail along the waterfront in Foot Log Park. When the group was walking through the park, the line between private and public land was unclear. We were walking directly behind people's backyards. A trail here would better clarify that you are walking on public land and help lead people towards the pedestrian bridge.

Many other comments were shared, including ensuring that all curb ramps are ADA compliant; installing bike racks in front of the town hall, the public boat ramp, and Avalon Park; widening the paths in the athletic complex to accommodate golf carts; and creating a new boat ramp or dock in Avalon Park, which would be closer to the public parking lot on Louisa Lane. That does not sound like a walkability improvement until you consider that the parking lot is about four blocks away from the current boat ramp at the end of Market Street. Having a closer boat ramp to that parking lot could potentially reduce boat traffic on Water Street and make it more comfortable to walk on Water Street. Also, we noted a tree that blocks the visibility of the crosswalk at Cecil and Baltimore Streets. This could be especially problematic for smaller children walking to school. The intersection design that was described earlier may require removing the tree, or it could be preserved in a new design with improved sightlines. The Next Steps section of the report gets into how to bring these ideas into reality and provides information on federal and state funding programs. This report has been reviewed by the Town of Charlestown. They approved it. It has been finalized and is on our website: www.wilmaco.org/walkable.

15. Demographics 2022 Projection Series Update

Mr. Dan Blevins said according to the 2020 Census, the last decade saw the slowest growth since the Great Depression. Nationally, the U.S. population is growing, but slowing. The population continues to gray. Deaths have caught up to births. Much of that is Covid-related, however, in 2019, there were four states that reached the natural increase threshold of having more deaths than births. By 2021 and 2022 half of the United States met that threshold, Delaware included. With Covid, there was about 185,000 difference in what was expected versus actual births from 2019 through 2020. Nationally, the U.S. is close to immigration becoming the main source of growth. Immigration can bring growth, and it has, but it will be uneven. It is not necessarily a guaranteed number moving forward. The 2020 census gives us a chance to look back, going back to 1980. Delaware population increased significantly in New Castle and Sussex Counties in the 1990's. In the 2000's Kent County had significant growth. The total growth in Delaware started a relative descent since 1990. There has also been a change in the share of the population. In 1980, New Castle County had sixty-seven percent of the population of the state, but now it is down to fifty-eight percent as Sussex County's share has increased. Looking at internal household changes gives insight to what can be anticipated in the future regarding how many people are working, how many school-aged children there are, how household size is changing, how many households rent versus own, and how old people are, which points to how many people need different transit. Since 2020, Delaware's total population increased by about

206,000 people. In New Council County, half of the population increase has been the south of the canal. Looking at the planning districts, MOT had significant increases, as did the resort areas in Sussex County.

The population that is over sixty-five years old roughly doubled. From 2000 to 2020, Sussex County went from one in five people being over sixty-five to close to one in three. The MOT area has had almost as much growth as the Lewes area with 9,100. The over age eighty-five population doubled from 2000 to 2020. That leads to discussion of who is aging in place and where the assisted living facilities are. New Castle County and Cecil County have seen a net loss of population under the age of eighteen from 2000 to 2020. In New Castle County, north of the canal had a net loss of 9,200 people under the age of eighteen. MOT and Smyrna have seen an increase.

Houses are being built, but from 2000 to 2020, the Brandywine, Wilmington, and New Castle area have seen many households become single-person households as kids move out, or a spouse passes away. New Castle County has doubled the number of single person households since 2000, but 55% of that is in Brandywine, Wilmington, and New Castle area. From the transit side, the number of sixty-five and older single-person households has really increased, especially in Sussex County, though also scattered throughout New Castle County. Looking at mobility impacts in all three counties, there are fewer households with zero cars, but those with three or more cars have increased. Family households are two or more people living together who are related to each other, either by birth or by marriage. Non-family households have a single person or two non-related people. Two-thirds of the net new households in New Castle County between 2000 and 2020 are non-family households. There is a marked difference in household size between family and non-family households.

Mr. John Sisson asked if the University of Delaware and places like that are subtracted from these numbers. Mr. Blevins said the dorms would be considered group quarters. When students rent a house or apartment, that is considered a non-family household. Mr. Sisson said he was curious about the census if someone gets picked up where they live or where they go to school. Mr. Blevins said that is a long conversation, because that is the one of the challenges of the 2020 census. Ms. Heather Dunigan said the City of Newark is appealing that, because when the census was taken that year, it was at the beginning of Covid, and students were out. Mr. Blevins said the same thing happened to any small college town. In 2020, they start the census on April 1st, but everyone was sent home in the middle of March. They called the schools to ask how many people were supposed to be in their dorms. So, they got that number. Those who rented a house or an apartment off campus, that is where things were really unclear. That is where Newark's numbers were lower, because those students had scattered. In theory, those students put where they were as of April 1st, not necessarily where they should have been. So that is questionable. As they get counted, if there are four people in a house, it is a non-family household, but there are four people in it. If the non-family households were shown by planning district, Newark is bumped up a little bit because of that. Even as households are being added there are not as many people in each of the houses.

This information helps us anticipate the point in Delaware when we reach the end of natural increase. The data going back a couple of years shows a positive number for births over deaths. The information we just went over about the changes was just released in December. These numbers were adopted from the Consortium back in October. Delaware is heavily relying on migration to keep going. Sussex County is exclusively dependent on migration. There are more people dying than being born in Sussex County. Delaware did reach a population of one million. In New Castle County growth is basically flat by 2030. Sussex County still has a fair amount of

growth, but there is very little net growth in all of Delaware by the time we hit 2040. Looking at the historical numbers going back to 2000, the totals show that per decade the state is adding, so we are growing but slowing. With the Population Consortium, we are able to break these things out by age. You can see the difference with the eighty-five and over population. Roughly fifteen percent of people over the age of eighty-five spends at least some time in either a rehab or assisted living facility within a given year, and we are looking at 22,000 people, assuming fifteen percent of them would probably at some point be in some type of assisted living facility. For the mobility part, how many folks from a modeling perspective are generating trips on the roadway? More importantly, if they are aging in place, how are they getting around? Also, how many people are staying in the workforce? It does drop off precipitously after the age of sixty-five. Consider assisted living demand and demand on school districts. There are a couple of districts in the northern part of Delaware, but the three high schools in the Christina district could fit into two. Topics being saved for another day include labor force participation. When you look at labor force, once you hit sixty-five that number drops a lot. Granted, there is the interstate and people come from other parts of Maryland and Pennsylvania into Delaware for employment, but that is getting strained elsewhere, and we are not the only place with similar statistics. Delaware County and Philadelphia County look very similar.

Mr. John Sisson asked if this was presented to the TAC and if Ms. Cathy Smith could have a copy. He has been talking about this. Imagine our transit system, the aging, all the stuff that will be happening in Sussex County. Mr. Blevins said that is why he did this for all of Delaware, because especially at this level of geography, he thinks it is easier to understand if you look into the towns and counties. He had this information for everything that was shown and more. Then he did a spreadsheet as a reference to show zero-car households and where we have seen the changes, and all the population numbers shown today. So, he has it broken down simply for the technical folks to really dive into, instead of going through entire spreadsheets. The TAC is going to have the same presentation. Mr. Sisson said it will impact us on multiple levels. Mr. Blevins said it really does. As he was pulling it together, there are distinct patterns showing up, and some were forecast, but that eighty-five and over number from a travel demand model, what number we put in there about the people in that age category that are going out and about. They do not have nine-to-five jobs. Kids in dorms are out and about so they are part of the mix there. But once we reach that age, and especially that sixty-five and over single-person household. To the benefit of the newer technologies like ordering food, they are able to age in place longer. So, there is something there that can help foster them to stay in their homes. But at eighty-five and over, you start needing to be in some type of rehab facility or assisted living at some point temporary or permanent. Mr. Sisson asked if there was a change in the expected life expectancy number due to Covid, and if it is something that is expected to rebound. Mr. Blevins said it dipped, and there are other things making it dip too. The sedentary lifestyle and things of that nature are affecting that, but there were some changes in that as well.

Mr. Stephen O'Connor asked related to the eighty-five and over population, if a person in assisted living would be considered group quarters, and if there is consideration of the family dynamics, such as having a grandparent live with a younger family member who will take them to the doctor. Mr. Blevins said these are all things to think about. This is just where they are. How many are in each of these locations? The census does give you some of the household characteristics like if somebody is over sixty-five and head of household. You can really get into the deep recesses of the American Community Survey that tells you if they are in an in-law suite, or something of that nature. So, they are embedded in there somewhere, and that is why looking at sixty-five and over head of household starts to get into the aging in place, because if they are head of household you can start to infer some of that.

Mr. Sisson said you guess at what you see happening, but this reinforces what you thought was happening. Mr. Blevins said yes, twenty years ago he did very much the same presentation, so we could guess we are getting a little bit older now and now we are here, so it is reaffirming a lot of that. That single person household number, though, is probably bigger than what we were thinking before. We know it will happen a lot, and it does match up with our oldest areas in New Castle County that you hear anecdotally. There are many apartments and townhomes along Route 40, so it makes sense that some of those new homes were populated by an individual person, along with on the other side, households becoming four, to three, to two, to one from the aging side. So, those two things are weaving themselves together. Mr. Sisson said we see it in the availability of workforce. People go down to Sussex County. They are retired, and services are needed. There are not enough people to support the demand in the area. Mr. Blevins said yes, in the Sussex area, and then you get into trying to buy something in the resort area, the workforce moves out here, and then that is why Route 24 and Route 26 are seeking service. Mr. Sisson said they say they need a bus from Seaford to get them to the beach to work. Mr. Blevins said yes, but you are still looking at density. Even in New Castle County, half of the growth has been south of the canal, but 88% of the population of New Castle County lives north of the canal, even with that level of growth that they had. Mr. Sisson said talking about schools in Christina, look at all the schools they have been building for Appoquinimink. Every year there is a school opening for them. Mr. Blevins said and the rest of them that they have planned. Smyrna had their heyday in the early 2000s. It has almost really been flat since 2010 through there. Mr. Sisson said he is surprised MOT is not divided into more than one planning area since it is such a big space. Mr. Blevins said that is something in the census. They change everything else. The blocks, the tracks, everything else like that, they are shifting. That area has not really changed that much.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

16. DeIDOT's Administrative Modification Request Letters

ADJOURNMENT:

The Council adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

ATTACHMENTS: (0)