

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 11, 2021**

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:

Marc Coté, representing DeIDOT Secretary of Transportation, Nicole Majeski
Rich Hall, representing New Castle County Executive, Matthew Meyer
Connie Holland, 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
Michael Spencer, representing New Castle County Municipalities

Members absent:

Loucretia Wood representing Cecil County Municipalities

Guests, Observers:

Ian Beam, MDOT
Dee Durham, New Castle County Councilperson
Tom Fruehstorfer, PAC Chair
Arthur Jenkins, DeIDOT
Dillon McLaughlin
Kevin Melloy
Bill Smith, New Castle County Board of Realtors
Lanie Thornton, DeIDOT

Staff members:

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

Minutes prepared by Dawn Voss.

3. MINUTES:

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Marc Coté seconded by Mr. Herb Inden the Council approved the January 14, 2021 Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion passed.

(03-11-21-01)

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

None.

5. COUNCIL MEMBERS' AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Chairperson's Report:

Mr. John Sisson said a nominating committee for the 2021-2022 officers has been appointed. The committee is Connie Holland, Herb Inden, and Heather Murphy.

There was a transit service change on February 14th before the I-95 reconstruction project, which is going well. DTC planners did a great job redirecting transit around the construction, and there have been no significant delays or impacts on transit operations. DTC was also able to restore SEPTA service to Fairplay Station and Newark in January. Ridership is slowly starting to return to those two stations. Mr. Sisson thinks that will really begin to increase when more people start coming back to the offices, whether it is in Philadelphia, Wilmington, or Newark. A few people are taking the train to avoid the construction, but DeIDOT did a good job and they have been able to get around the I-95 construction.

Council Member's Reports:

Mr. Michael Spencer announced that this is his last Council meeting. He is retiring and his last day in office is April 15th. He expressed that it has been a pleasure working with everyone throughout the years. Council members wished him congratulations. Mr. Sisson said he has been a great council member and a true advocate for his constituency. It has been a pleasure working with him.

Mr. Marc Coté said DeIDOT rolled out a mobile ID, which is a driver's license or ID card that is downloaded, then shown on a phone. It is fully federally compliant and DeIDOT is working with project partners and retailers that will accept the mobile ID. See the DeIDOT website for more details.

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

- The New Castle County Transportation Alternatives Program applications were accepted through January 15th. Six applications were received.
- Staff presented on bicycle planning to the Urban Bike Project.
- Sixty-two people attended the City of New Castle Transportation Plan Workshop. Comments, videos, a survey, and an interactive map are available on the project website.
- Staff continues to participate in the New Castle County at 2050 Comprehensive Plan Deep Dive Sessions.
- Staff continues to participate in the Maryland Rail Plan update meetings, the Maryland Freight Plan Update, and the Maryland Transit Plan Update meetings.
- Staff supported Wilmington's Community Well-being Ambassador Initiative with data from our Social Determinants of Health Index. Separately, Delaware Guidance Services are using the index to help select a new outpatient office site in New Castle County.
- The Southbridge Neighborhood Plan had its first virtual public workshop last month and hopefully, an update will be presented at the next Council meeting.
- Staff presented with the Brower County MPO in Florida for the AMPO webinar entitled "How to Reach Hard to Reach Communities" on March 8th.
- On March 3rd the second Churchmans Crossing Public Workshop was held. Fifty-one people attended the workshop, which presented an overview of transportation and land use scenario

planning. Preliminary results of the Churchmans Crossing area were also presented. The project team is currently working on the modelling of the land use and transportation alternatives and is hoping to have a technical analysis workshop in the spring.

- Later today, the Delaware Truck Parking Focus Group will be meeting.
- On March 23rd, staff will present at the Delaware Chapter of WTS, Woman's Transportation Seminars, on progress and innovation, and how the pandemic changed transportation.
- Staff will be presenting at MASITE, which is the Mid-Atlantic States ITE, for pedestrian and bicycle planning at WILMAPCO with DVRPC, Lehigh Valley MPO and the South Jersey MPO.
- The Port of Wilmington Truck Analysis Workshop is scheduled for March 24th.
- Staff attended a meeting to discuss the initial modelling effort and data needs to continue work on the MARC/SEPTA commuter rail service extension ridership analysis. This meeting was attended by MDOT, MTA, DeIDOT, DTC, Cecil County, MARC, SEPTA, BMC, and DVRPC.
- The first advisory committee meeting for the Union Street Study will hopefully be held in April with a public workshop in May.
- The Air Quality Partnership, Delaware Commute Solutions, DeIDOT, Nemours, and the Urban Bike Project are planning a Transportation Tuesday on April 20th as part of the week-long virtual Earth Day event. Transportation Tuesday will include bike and pedestrian safety and bike maintenance education in the morning and an evening panel discussion highlighting environmentally friendly mode choices.
- Staff is coordinating with APA Delaware and the University of Delaware to conduct a series of five social justice training sessions that will begin on April 16th.
- Regarding the February financial report, we have expended about 60% of our budget. WILMAPCO is well under budget and proceeding with several projects.
- The preliminary 2020 audit report is available. There were no findings on the financial statements or federal awards. Nor were there any findings from last year. Once the report is finalized, electronic copies will be sent to councilmembers, funding agencies, the Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration.

7. Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Report:

Mr. Tom Fruehstorfer said the PAC chair appointment was the only action item at the February 22nd meeting. The PAC unanimously approved Mr. Fruehstorfer, representing the City of Newark, as chair and Mr. Mike Kaszynski, representing the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, as vice chair. The meeting included three presentation and discussion items. Mr. Dan Blevins presented WILMAPCO freight studies, explaining that WILMAPCO is working on three freight studies that will support the goals of the Delaware Statewide Freight Plan. Additional analysis is required for recommendations identified in that plan and other local plans including the Route 9 Master Plan, the Wilmington Comp Plan, and the Southbridge Circulation Study. The PAC discussed if the anticipated revenues from the 301 toll bonds were being generated and Mr. Blevins confirmed they are. The PAC also discussed when the Statewide Rail Plan will be updated. Mr. Blevins explained that it is being incorporated into the Statewide Freight Plan, which has a rail focus. Ms. Heather Dunigan presented the City of New Castle Transportation Plan Update. The PAC discussed an over or under pass at Routes 13 and 273, but Ms. Dunigan said the airport would prohibit it. There was discussion about existing and proposed Amazon facilities in the area and their impact on freight traffic through local neighborhoods. Finally, Ms. Randi Novakoff shared the Route 9 Master Plan outreach video. Several PAC members said it was well done.

8. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Report:

Ms. Heather Dunigan said the TAC met on January 21st. There were no action items at that meeting, but there were presentations on the Route 9 video and updates on demographics and goods movement studies.

At the February 18th meeting, TAC recommended approving the project prioritization for the TAP projects using the technical scores, as well as certifying the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process. Stacey Dahlstrom, from New Castle County, presented a Comprehensive Plan Update, and Ms. Dunigan presented the City of New Castle Transportation Plan.

ACTION ITEMS:

9. To Certify the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process.

Ms. Heather Dunigan said this was formerly part of the Transportation Improvement Program, but because that is now a biennial process, this will be brought to Council on its own periodically. The self-certification outlines WILMAPCO's federally required processes. The provided resolution outlines the requirements that WILMAPCO fulfills with an attachment that shows where in the WILMAPCO documents the information can be found.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Marc Coté seconded by Mr. Michael Spencer the Council approved the Resolution to Certify the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process.

Motion passed.

(03-11-21-02)

10. To Approve the New Castle County Prioritization of Transportation Alternatives Projects for FY 2021.

Ms. Heather Dunigan said it has been a few years since there has been a call for projects for Transportation Alternatives Projects in New Castle County. Six projects were received. The deadline was January 15th. Staff scored the projects using the project prioritization criteria which was updated based on the Transportation Justice Report. Scoring was reviewed with the TAC, and with the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group, who recommended one change to scoring. This is being brought to Council to prioritize the projects using a technical score and any other factors councilmembers may want to consider.

The technical scoring process is based on a variety of criteria including land use factors such as proximity to community centers, libraries, schools, and parks. Transportation factors are considered including designation as a bicycle route or greenway and the proximity to transit. Other transportation criteria include pedestrian and bicycle crashes, location along abandoned railroads, historic elements, and considering gaps in the transportation network. Other factors look at the demographics, and other land use factors like municipalities and hometown overlays, density of population, employment, and transportation equity and access. Scoring this year was changed based on the Transportation Justice Report. Scoring was added for areas with high concentrations of Black population, because these areas have been underfunded historically.

Of the six applications that were received, three were in the City of Wilmington; one in the City of Newark; and two within New Castle County. Brandywine Village scored the highest, followed by South College Avenue, then Lovering Avenue in the City of Wilmington, followed by Southbridge and Millcreek. Grubb Road is a small, somewhat isolated project without much land

use density in the area and so scored low. The TAC recommended a change in score for the Millcreek project. The Nonmotorized Working Group recommended we consider a couple of crashes just outside of the study area, which made the project score evenly with Southbridge.

The Brandywine Village project is a continuation of previous phases. This will be the third and final phase and includes streetscaping, traffic elements, lighting, sidewalks, and other improvements around Market Street, Concord Avenue and Vandever Avenue. The City of Newark and the University of Delaware submitted jointly for the South College Avenue corridor project, which includes traffic calming, lighting, crosswalks, and pedestrian and bike facilities. The Lovering Avenue/Dupont Street project will fill a gap in the pedestrian system and tie into the Augustine Cutoff Pathway project. The Southbridge project is the third and final phase of a continuing project and will include traffic calming, streetscaping, and pedestrian lighting. The Millcreek Pathway project focuses on the area around Hercules and Millcreek Roads and is part of larger network of planned pathways. The Grubb Road Sidewalk project is a block of sidewalk that will connect the two sides of the street.

Mr. Rich Hall asked why there is an extra point for municipalities. The fact that something is a municipality does not mean there is something different about the area, the urban form, or anything else. Some of the incorporated communities in New Castle County are even more suburban than some parts of unincorporated New Castle County. There are many factors, but he does not know why being a municipality makes an area more appropriate for this kind of funding. Ms. Dunigan replied that this has been in the scoring for a few years, because this is the only source of funding for transportation projects for many municipalities. There are municipal-maintained roads and TAP funding is critical for improvements. When New Castle County added Hometown Overlays to the code, the scoring was amended for the Hometown Overlays, because they are almost like towns within the unincorporated county. Ms. Zegeye added that is how it started. The TAP ended up funding almost exclusively projects in the City of Wilmington and Newark so that is the reason points were added for municipalities. Ms. Dunigan said the technical scores are intended to be one tool for Council to use in ranking the projects. It looks at how well a project aligns to the criteria, but there may be other factors the Council wishes to consider adjusting the ranking of the projects.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Herb Inden seconded by Mr. Michael Spencer the Council approved the New Castle County Prioritization of Transportation Alternatives Projects for FY 2021.

Motion passed.

(03-11-21-03)

11. To Approve the Proposed New Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Member.

Ms. Randi Novakoff said a new PAC member is proposed for approval. Ms. Kathryn Economou is a senior at the University of Delaware majoring in Public Policy and International Relations. She hopes to become a regional planner working at DVRPC and plans to pursue a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning. She believes innovative and inclusive planning is paramount in helping communities to thrive and grow. Ms. Economou serves to increase the diversity of the PAC by representing a much-needed younger demographic. Our decisions today have a great impact on the lives of those tomorrow so developing strategies to engage with youth is a goal that we are striving to achieve. Staff does recommend approval of Ms. Economou to the PAC.

Mr. Herb Inden said Ms. Economou sounds like a great addition.

Mr. Rich Hall said this sounds like a great idea. It is an appropriate time that goes along with the County's Youth Planning Board that has been in place for nine months. The future belongs more to the youth. There are not many of examples of bringing youth into our process, but he is seeing more of it and is glad to see it. Ms. Novakoff added that we met Ms. Economou through her involvement in the Youth Planning Board.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Herb Inden seconded by Mr. Rich Hall the Council approved the Resolution to Approve the Proposed New Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Member.

Motion passed.

(03-11-21-04)

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

12. FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said staff is developing the draft FY 2022 UPWP. WILMAPCO receives federal funds from Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration to support transportation planning, and this money comes through MDOT and DeIDOT. The federal funds must be matched by twenty percent with state or local funds. The match can be made in cash or by in-kind services. For this draft UPWP the cash share funding from the State of Maryland (MDOT) is \$12,803 and \$4,400 from Cecil County. The cash share from the State of Delaware (DeIDOT) is \$416,817. New Castle County's cash share is \$31,500. The cash share from the City of Wilmington is \$11,796, which is divided between the Planning Department and Public Works.

Based on what is received from Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations, the cost share, and the cash share for the State of Delaware to perform transportation planning in New Castle County is \$2,300,565. In the State of Maryland, to do planning work in Cecil County, the cost share is \$128,028. The cash share is \$119,625, with in-kind match from Cecil County expected to be \$8,403. The total of cost share is \$2,428,593 with a cash share of \$2,420,190 and the in-kind share of \$8,403.

In the proposed UPWP there are thirteen tasks listed with each having subtasks under them. Staff proposes that a major portion of the funding go toward the Monitoring of Sub-Regional Studies Implementation; followed by Sub-Regional Studies and Coordination; then Administration, which is for staff as well as all committee staffing; then the next major category of funding is Regional Planning and Technical Analysis.

The bulk of WILMAPCO's work is done in house by staff, but we propose about \$600,000 would be spent on consultant work. The consultant tasks are included in the cash activity, with the first eight tasks listed under Consultant Costs being tasks that are performed every year. Bookkeeping (\$10,000) is for a CPA that reviews staff work, especially the monthly billing that is sent to MDOT and DeIDOT. The Urban Bike Project (\$3,000) and the Newark Bike Project (\$2,500) are relatively small amounts of money but are incredibly good projects that are part of Safe Routes to School and Safe Kids Delaware in Wilmington and Newark. The next four projects listed are Regional Intersection Counts (\$30,000), Regional Modeling Support (\$20,000), Congestion Management System Consultant Support (\$35,000), University of Delaware Park & Ride Data Collection (\$10,000), and the Regional Transportation Performance Measurement Development (\$30,000). These are the basis for most of the work here at

WILMAPCO; from putting together the CMS Reports, to progress reports to doing the many sub-regional studies, to all the technical materials that generated from these.

The rest of the proposed projects are new to the FY 2022 UPWP.

- The Transportation Justice Analysis is to fulfill the recommendation from the 2019 Transportation Justice Plan and will explore fixed route bus service in neighborhoods with majority Black populations, impoverished neighborhoods, and food deserts. This analysis is needed at the neighborhood and system-wide level and we are proposing to work with our WILMAPCO Transportation Justice Working Group in close cooperation with DTC staff. Staff is proposing \$30,000 for this effort.
- The Delaware Freight Plan is a statewide plan to support DeIDOT's effort to develop and update the 2017 Statewide Freight Plan. It is a requirement of the FAST Act that DeIDOT update the freight plan in consultation with MPOs and other public and private stakeholders. This is WILMAPCO's share of a larger effort to which DeIDOT, and the Dover/Kent County MPO will be contributing as well. Staff is proposing \$50,000 for this effort.
- Wilmington Initiatives Support is to continue the Wilmington Initiatives public outreach, management assistance and interagency coordination that began in 1996. Staff is proposing \$45,000 in the FY 2022 UPWP.
- For the I-95 Cap Feasibility Study in the City of Wilmington, staff is proposing to work in partnership with DeIDOT and the City of Wilmington to explore the feasibility of creating a cap over the section of I-95 that is below grade within Wilmington from Delaware Avenue to 6th Street. Nationwide, many cities are creating caps over major highways and using this found space for parks, recreational purposes, and other creative development. Public outreach will be a crucial element of this study and there is already a grass-roots movement in the City of Wilmington to convert vehicle bridges over I-95 to pedestrian spaces. We propose that staff lead the study and provide technical guidance and support to partners. We intend to issue a request for proposals. Staff will review work done, such as Penn's Landing Park through the William Penn Foundation. Another project is near the Arch in St. Louis. The University of Delaware had an initial visioning exercise specifically for this I-95 capping. Staff proposes \$100,000 be budgeted for this work.

Mr. Herb Inden asked who proposed the cap and if this is to look at the bridge issue or to look at a big cap, which he believes is expensive. Ms. Zegeye replied that this proposal came from DeIDOT Secretary Nicole Majeski at the request of communities and the Washington delegation. The idea is to explore what can be done. It is a feasibility study. There are many questions that need to be answered so we hope to put together a scope to see what needs to be studied with input from many stakeholders including, the City, DeIDOT, elected officials, and whoever is interested. Mr. Inden proposed that this be discussed at the Wilmington Initiatives meeting. Ms. Zegeye said because we are requesting WILMAPCO funding, it had to come to the WILMAPCO Council first, but it will be discussed at next Wilmington Initiatives meeting.

- MPO 22.13 is monitoring of sub-regional studies and implementation. A significant amount of funds was budgeted for this to ensure monitoring support is put toward all the projects that have been recently completed or adopted by Council. Staff proposes that by putting this monitoring support toward each of these plans, we ensure their implementation. These plans include the US 202 Twenty-year Land Use and Transportation Plan, Route 9 Corridor Master Plan, Southern New Castle County Master Plan, North Claymont Area Master Plan, Newport Transportation Plan, Governor Printz Boulevard Corridor Master Plan, and the Churchmans Crossing Plan Update. Each task listed in this section has "monitoring support" at the end of its title and may include a monitoring committee consisting of member

agencies, community stakeholders, and elected officials as appropriate. This would provide consultant support to monitor changing transportation and land use patterns in each area. There may be opportunities to develop local priorities that would feed projects into the TIP and the CTP. We understand that every area is unique but wanted to provide a mechanism to implement recommendations from these plans and studies.

The UPWP will be presented at the TAC meeting on March 18th. A thirty-day public comment period is planned for April 1st through May 3rd. Hopefully, the draft will be approved by the TAC and PAC in April, and then Council will approve it at the May 13th meeting. Then, it will be submitted to DelDOT, MDOT, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration in May. Implementation will begin in July 2021.

13. Demographics Update

Mr. Dan Blevins said the recent census will have political implications. This is the first full year that these projections are being released from the Delaware Population Consortium as a formally established under Senate Bill 7, which was signed back in November of 2019. Right now, all municipalities and seasonal projections are being done. Maryland's Department of Planning has provided projections out to 2045, however, the last time employment data was released was 2015. Census data would normally be out by March 31st, but it was delayed, and the block level data that is needed for redistricting will not be out until September 2021. Politically, the gerrymandering cannot begin until everyone gets the block-level data so instead of having a year, states only have about six months to complete redistricting before people begin filing to run for the mid-term elections.

The U.S. is growing but overall growth is slowing. The 2010's decade is second slowest decade of growth the U.S. has had and only the Great Depression in the 1930's had slower growth. Deaths are catching up to births. In 2019, natural increase was negative in four states, meaning they had more deaths than births. As a result, immigration becomes a much bigger part of our growth, but it is more uneven and so more difficult to predict. By 2030, all of the baby boomers will reach the age of 65. One out of five people will be over 65 by 2030. Net migration will overtake natural increase by 2030 throughout the country. By 2034, the population of those over 65 will be larger than those under 18. COVID was a baby bust through 2020. There were about 300,000 fewer births in 2020 than expected, and that trend is continuing into 2021. Projected changes in congressional representation include ten states losing a seat and seven gaining seats.

Looking back to 2000, Delaware's population growth has slowed over the past several decades. That is expected to continue through 2030-2040. By 2028, migration will be the only way for Delaware to grow. From the 2020 Consortium projections, most of the growth is happening in Sussex County. New Castle County will peak around 2040 and with the age structure the county begins a slight decline toward 2040 or 2050 with Sussex growing due to a variety of factors. With that, employment follows suit with New Castle County and Sussex County nearly swapping their amounts of total employment. With New Castle County's economy being more of a service sector, those jobs will follow the population. New Castle County has seen a considerable reduction in net migration since the recession in 2008/2009, even going negative some years. The natural increase in the county has steadily declined as well. From 2010 to 2019, Middletown and Newark have had some growth, and that continues into the future. The municipalities are more difficult to predict. They work with a very small sample size, so they tend to be a little more conservative, but they are produced annually now as part of the business practices of the Consortium.

Cecil County's population has been relatively even over the last fifteen years. They saw a similar pattern as New Castle County in that migration fell off in 2008/2009, around the time of the recession. In late 2020 the latest populations forecasts were released, and Cecil County expects to grow by about 28,000 people between 2020 and 2045. The employment data is a little older but shows the addition of about 14,000 jobs. The MDP forecasting has been on a steady slide. In 2009 their forecast predicted 155,000 people in Cecil County by 2030, but they have been reducing those projections to reflect much less robust growth. BRAC, when they were consolidating in Aberdeen, put out scenarios. The BRAC forecasted Cecil County to have a population of 126,800 by 2017. Now that is the forecast for the county by 2045.

New Castle County has seen several internal changes impacting households and population. Household types are changing in terms of renter versus owner in parts of the county. This accelerated during the recession of 2008/2009 and has continued. There has been growth in non-family households, where people are living alone or with unrelated individuals and those households are generally smaller in size. Renters also have smaller household size. The aging population affects households because as people age, they may move into assisted living and cause vacancies. This affects the type of vacancies as houses are vacant for legal reasons as opposed to being for sale. The Brandywine, Lower Christina, and Pike Creek areas have a projected decrease in total households between 2020 and 2030. Locally, the change in the over 65 and under 18 population is reflected in New Castle County in that there has been a net decrease of about 3,800 people under the age of 18 between 2000 and 2017, but an increase of about 26,000 over the age of 65.

14. City of New Castle Transportation Plan Update

Ms. Heather Dunigan said this project began last the summer to update the transportation plan for the City of New Castle, which was last completed in 1999, as well as build off the 2020 draft Comprehensive Plan. The overall goals of the plan are to improve the multimodal network of the city, provide connectivity to neighborhoods, improve trails, and enhance livability and health; reduce illegal truck traffic and improve safety; address flooding and sea level rise impacts; improve the gateways to the historic city; and develop a shared parking analysis.

The project began with evaluating existing conditions including zoning and land use; demographics; transportation issues; and environmental constraints and assets. About half of the existing land use is open space and parks, then residential is the next most used land use, followed by industrial and manufacturing uses. The comprehensive plan, which was finished in 2020, is in draft form and is waiting for approval from the State. The demographics of the City of New Castle reflect a diverse community with a mix of ages, races, and income levels. It is well served by public transit with bus Routes 15 and 51 travelling directly through the community, and many services along the Route 13 corridor, where the busiest bus stops in the area are located. Roadways were evaluated for traffic, congestion, and level of service at intersections. Most traffic is along Route 13, where there are some failing intersections. When traffic is backed up on Route 13 or there is beach traffic, there is a lot of cut-through traffic through local streets, which diminishes quality of life in the community. Some of the worst freight bottlenecks are within the City of New Castle and surrounding area according to our regional and state-wide analysis of truck bottlenecks. Trucks add to the cut-through traffic and diminish quality of life within the City of New Castle. Crashes are focused on the Route 13 corridor, however Route 273, the Ferry Cutoff and Route 9 also have high numbers of crashes. There is a good network of sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes. The trails in particular are one of the treasures of the community with the Jack Markell and the Battery Park Trails. However, looking at bicycle level of

traffic stress, there are some disconnected facilities that are comfortable for biking and walking but are obstructed by difficult roadways and intersections that block access between the historic area and surrounding neighborhoods and commercial areas. There are some planned transportation projects, some funded and some not. There is a project along Ferry Cutoff by the railroad tracks to improve safety elements. There is an expensive and challenging project to address flooding along the Route 9/River Road area to the south that keeps getting delayed. To the north of the city, there are some Route 9 improvements that came from the Route 9 Corridor Study. Many assets and destinations are clustered in the historic center of town, but the commercial areas are on the other side of Route 9, and bike and pedestrian connections between those destinations and where people live are very important. Constraints include flooding and sea level rise issues. Being along the river and very low-lying, there are a number of areas that experience flooding issues and projected sea level rise.

The project is in the community visioning phase. The first public workshop was last month. The project team will look at what was heard from the community and do technical analysis to assess feasibility of recommendations which will be presented to the public. Then, recommendations will be narrowed down based on community preference and a final report created. The team is working closely with the City of New Castle, DelDOT and DART; and have brought on Century Engineering to assist with the project. The project team is working with an advisory committee that includes local organizations, citizens, and other groups who have an interest in the community. Public input is always a major part of the process so there will be three workshops in total. We have a holistic approach, looking at balancing some of the traffic issues that the community is experiencing with quality of life for community. There is often a conflict between through traffic and local needs, and even tourism versus visitor traffic issues.

At the public workshop, presentations were brief and most of the workshop was spent in three breakout rooms, where attendees virtually marked up maps and discussed issues much like an in-person workshop. The breakout rooms focused on three themes: Bike/Pedestrian & Transit; Traffic, Freight & Parking; and Environment, Flooding & Streetscape. In the breakout rooms people were invited to draw on the maps themselves using Zoom annotation tools and have roundtable discussions. After each of the three sessions, everyone came back to the main room and moderators reported on the discussion. Bicycle issues included disconnection between the Markell Trail and Battery Park, and that wayfinding and bicycle parking are needed. Some pedestrian issues are sidewalk maintenance and disconnection at intersections that are challenging to cross. Regarding transit, there are a good number of routes, but some of the routes are slow and unreliable, particularly getting to Wilmington and Newark, and people would like to see direct access to the airport and train station. Many people mentioned traffic issues including people avoiding congestion on US 13 by cutting through town, which then causes congestion on Route 9 and Delaware Street. There is a problem with speeding and people going the wrong way on one-way streets. There are backups and flooding issues. Freight also is an issue. Some trucks travel close to historic houses, which causes the houses to rattle. There are issues with noise from the train going through in the middle of the night. The Amazon facility is also causing traffic within the community. There is a new parking lot, but the jury is still out on how that will work. Overall, there are issues with the need for more parking planning as well as how to have a better flow for people who are looking for parking. Intersections have issues for all modes of travel. Pedestrians often find them challenging. Some invite traffic to cut through town rather than staying on the main road. Better design for all the modes is going to be critical along the Ferry Cutoff, Route 9 and Route 273 corridors.

The next few months will be spent developing alternatives based on feedback received. A second public workshop will be held late spring or summer. Then those alternatives will be refined in the summer and brought back to a third public workshop in the fall.

Mr. John Sisson asked when the input was received as people were looking for direct service to Wilmington when there is direct service to Wilmington. Ms. Dunigan replied that some people mentioned that it was a little too slow to get to Wilmington, particularly the train station because they have to transfer buses to get there. Some of it may be better education about what routes are available. Some of the bus routes loop around the neighborhoods and people want something a little quicker. Mr. Sisson said they put the 51 out there to do what the 13 did, but it goes to 4th Street, not the train station, so that might be part of it. He will take the information back to DTC. Ms. Dunigan said before working on the study, she was not even aware of bus Route 51, it might be that people have not discovered that yet. Also, on the outreach side, there is a Wikimap and survey on the website, so people can still draw on the Wikimap.

15. Route 9 Video

Ms. Randi Novakoff said WILMAPCO has been working with King Creative to create a series of videos. The videos seek to explain the planning process in a simple and easily understood way, as well as encourage public involvement in the planning process. The five video topics are “Pedestrian and Bike Planning”, “Transportation Justice”, “Who is WILMAPCO?”, “How an Idea Becomes a Project” which mostly focuses on the TIP and RTP, and “The Route 9 Corridor Master Plan Process”. The videos are funded by a FHWA State Transportation Innovation Council Grant. Once completed, the videos will be posted on YouTube and shared with local libraries, schools, and civic organizations. They will also be shown at public workshops as well as shared with local schools and agencies. Staff is still working on most of the videos, but she has a preview of the Route 9 video to share. The video was shown. Ms. Novakoff said they are currently working to add Spanish subtitles to the video and working to tweak the final slide to make sure they have the correct list of partnering organizations involved, include all the logos, and list the website to show people where to go to get involved.

Mr. Rich Hall said it looked great, and the County is taking the four subarea plans, including Route 9, the Claymont, Concord Pike (202), and the Southern New Castle County Plan, and going to put them before County Council for adoption in the next several weeks. This will amend the County Comp Plan and create a new chapter for the subarea plans as a place for them to reside inside the comprehensive plan. That plan was just being completed in the first several months of the Meyer administration and as he came here with the Meyer administration, unfortunately not many people in his department had a lot of engagement in it, but they look forward to moving forward with many of the things in there. Mr. Hall also mentioned that New Castle County is having a workshop next Wednesday, March 17th. The topic is infrastructure, transportation, and hazard mitigation for the deep dive workshop on Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. and all the information is on their website.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

16. DeIDOT’s Administrative Modification Request Letters

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Michael Spencer made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Rich Hall seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

ATTACHMENTS: (0)