

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
JULY 13, 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 2:02 p.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  
Richard Mahan, Charlestown Commissioner, representing Cecil County Municipalities  
Stephen O'Connor, representing Cecil County Executive, Danielle Hornberger  
Charuni Patibanda, 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:**

Maggie Adams, HDR  
Mark Alisesky, HDR  
James Coverdale, DNREC  
Ben Gruswitz, Ardencroft Town Chair  
Charles Liggan  
Rashad Pinckney, Maryland Department of Transportation  
Vicki Rinkerman, Port Deposit Town Administrator  
Catherine Salarano, Maryland Department of the Environment  
Randy Waltermeyer, McMahon

**Staff members:**

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner  
Sharen Elcock, Executive Assistant  
Dave Gula, Principal Planner  
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner  
Jacob Thompson, Senior Planner  
Dawn Voss, Outreach Coordinator  
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by Dawn Voss.

**3. MINUTES:**

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Stephen O'Connor seconded by Mr. Tyson Byrne the Council approved the May 11, 2023, Council Meeting Minutes.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:**

None.

**COUNCIL MEMBERS' AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

**5. Chairperson's Report:**

Mr. John Sisson said DART has been busy with the DART Reimagined Study. There will be public hearings in August for the fall service change, which will be minor. There will be an alignment change for Route 40 and future alignment changes for the 13 and 61 when the Claymont Train Station opens. There is an on-time performance report, and DTC participated in the NASTO national event that was held this week.

**Council Member's Reports:**

None

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

- Staff are coordinating with DVRPC on a climate pollution reduction grant for the Philadelphia area. DVRPC will take the lead, but WILMAPCO will support our region.
- Staff participated in the West Side Grows Together Steering Committee on June 5<sup>th</sup>, where they discussed updating their revitalization plan.
- The Arden Transportation Plan held their final public workshop on June 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff co-hosted the Delaware Freight Summit on June 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The Concord Pike Monitoring Committee met on June 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The Southbridge Transportation Action Plan had a final workshop on June 10<sup>th</sup>. Another workshop is scheduled for July 18<sup>th</sup> before the civic association meeting. The report is expected to be brought to Council for action in September.
- The project team presented the results of the Newport Train Station Update to the Newport Transportation Plan Monitoring Committee.
- The North Claymont and Governor Printz Monitoring Committee met on May 24<sup>th</sup> to finalize the report.
- The Churchman's Crossing Monitoring Committee met on May 24<sup>th</sup>.
- May was Bike Month. Staff participated in Bike to Work Day on May 19<sup>th</sup> in Newark and the Downes Elementary School Bike Rodeo on May 30<sup>th</sup>. Newark was named a Silver Bicycle Friendly Community by the American Bike League of America. Staff helped with the application.
- The Wilmington Initiatives Open House Workshop was on June 16<sup>th</sup>. We had twelve projects on display.
- Staff attended 2023 Northeast Association of State Transportation Officials Conference in Wilmington on July 11-12.
- Safe Streets for All New Castle County Advisory Committee met on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. A draft report is out for committee review.
- Staff presented and tabled at the New Castle County Chamber State of the County event on July 12<sup>th</sup>.

- Staff will present at the IPA Virtual Policy Forum titled Delaware in 2040: Demographic Changes and the Impacts on Infrastructure.
- Six proposals were received for the East Elkton Traffic and Safety Plan. Interviews will be next week.
- Three proposals were received for the Kirkwood Highway Corridor Master Plan. Interviews will be on August 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Proposals for the South Claymont and Philadelphia Pike Corridor Master Plan are being accepted through July 26<sup>th</sup>.
- The Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration have jointly approved our conformity determination for the RTP and the Work Program for FY 2024.
- For the financial report, we have spent about 90% of the budget.
- We have hired a new Administrative Assistant. Ms. Elizabeth Espinal will begin July 17<sup>th</sup>.

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

Mr. Dave Gula said the PAC met on June 12<sup>th</sup> with eleven members present and three people from Reach Riverside attending as guests. After the Executive Director's Report, a member suggested a member of the Council for Civic Organizations for Brandywine Hundred join the PAC as they were active in the Concord Pike Master Plan. They have not served on the PAC since 2015. Ms. Heather Dunigan presented Safe Streets for All. Members expressed support for the project and concerns about crash statistics. Mr. Bill Swiatek presented the Transportation Justice Bus Connectivity Analysis. A member from Cecil County questioned a particular bus stop and Mr. Swiatek will follow up with her. Mr. Swiatek also presented the Ardens Transportation Plan.

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

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said at the May TAC meeting, action items included a TIP amendment to revise funding for US 13 and a TIP amendment to revise funding for the I-295 Northbound project. They also recommended approving the 2023 Transportation Justice Bus Connectivity Analysis. They had two presentations, which are the North Claymont Area Master Plan and Governor Printz Monitoring Committee Update and Safe Streets for All. At the June 15<sup>th</sup> TAC Meeting, they did not have a quorum, so they voted via email on two action items including accepting a project submitted to the Transportation Alternative Program for Cecil County and recommending endorsement of the Ardens Transportation Plan.

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

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

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said this request is from DelDOT to revise funding for US 13. This amendment increases the funding from \$15 million to \$19.9 million, and the amendment would extend construction funding, which ends in 2025, to 2026. The PAC took no action on this. The TAC recommended this amendment at their May meeting. The Air Quality Subcommittee found that this will not trigger a revised air quality conformance analysis. Staff recommends Council approval.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Tyson Byrne seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council approved the amendment of the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Motion passed.

(07-13-23-02)

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

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said this is a request from DeIDOT to amend the TIP to increase the funding for the I-295, Northbound, SR 141 to US 13 Project from \$9.4 million to \$18.5 million. It adds additional funding for construction in FY 2024. The PAC took no action on this. The TAC recommended the amendment at their May meeting. The Air Quality Subcommittee found that it does not trigger a revised air quality conformity analysis. Staff recommends Council approval.

Ms. Charuni Patibanda asked what is related to doubling the funding. Ms. Zegeye said the cost estimate went up, and this is to help relieve the congestion with the associated project. Ms. Pamela Steinebach said generally, all of DeIDOT's construction estimates have been trending high due to the supply chain issues, and that has been happening for quite a few months.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Eric Thompson seconded by Mr. Stephen O'Connor the Council approved the amendment of the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Motion passed.

(07-13-23-03)

**11. To Endorse the 2023 Transportation Justice Bus Connectivity Analysis.**

Mr. Bill Swiatek said this report provides some case studies on several neighborhoods in the region that were identified in the 2019 Transportation Justice Plan as either food deserts with poor transit connectivity to supermarkets or concentrations of Black or impoverished populations with poor transit connectivity to employment centers with many entry level jobs. Each of the case studies includes recommendations for improvements to the bus network and/or the pedestrian connections to existing bus stops that would enhance transit access to supermarkets and entry level jobs. The units are considered connected to destinations if they can reach them within a thirty-minute door-to-door transit trip, including no more than ten minutes of walking. If the most impactful recommendations are implemented, about 1,500 more households in food deserts would have good transit connectivity to grocery stores, and more than 2,300 more households in Black and impoverished neighborhoods would have good transit connectivity to entry level job centers. The report was developed by the Transportation Justice Working Group with support from the University of Delaware Center for Applied Demography Survey Research. The PAC did not take action on the item, but received presentations and reviewed the final plan for language. TAC recommended that Council endorse the analysis at their May meeting. Staff recommends Council endorse this analysis.

Ms. Charuni Patibanda asked why there were no case studies of people who live in Wilmington accessing job opportunities in Newark. Mr. Swiatek said we were looking at the existing communities that were flagged, including many communities across the region. Suburban communities stood out and one Wilmington community that is on the edge of the city, because they had the weakest transit link. Communities in the City of Newark or Wilmington generally have better transit links than suburban communities. Ms. Patibanda said in her previous role as Economic Development Director for the County, a major concern was that people in Wilmington are not connected to the many entry-level job opportunities at the Newark campus. The private companies were creating shuttle service. There is a lot of transit there, but there are a lot of jobs here, and the length of time to travel here can be prohibitive. Mr. John Sisson said DTC is going

to wrap this study into the DART Reimagined Study. Some of this is sidewalks. Some is an area that used to have service but no ridership, so the service was removed. The question is if something has changed and if there is direct bus service to where you want to go.

Mr. Steve O'Connor said he understands the PAC member's comment about Steele's Motel with the high traffic and cars going fast. At one time, there was a proposal to redo that intersection. It is a difficult intersection. Mr. Swiatek said the bus stops are far away from the residents, and the median is overgrown. You want to find a better connection by relocating it, then look at that intersection for a safety upgrade.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Eric Thompson seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council endorses the 2023 Transportation Justice Bus Connectivity Analysis.

Motion passed.

(07-13-23-04)

### **12. To Accept the FY 2024 Transportation Alternatives Program Application.**

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said the application period for TAP projects in Maryland was April 14<sup>th</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup>. WILMAPCO and Maryland SHA received an application from Cecil County which is the Port Deposit Marina Park. Normally, multiple projects are received, and Council is asked to approve the prioritization. As there is only one, Council is asked to accept it so Maryland SHA can take it to the next step. This application can go to the Capital Transportation Alternative Program or use Recreational Trails Funding. Staff are working with SHA as to which funding source they will work with if the project is accepted. The PAC did not take any action. The TAC recommended Council acceptance via an email vote. The Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group reviewed the application and are glad to see a TAP project in Cecil County. Staff recommends that the Council accept the application.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Stephen O'Connor seconded by Mr. Dave Edgell the Council accepted the FY 2024 Transportation Alternatives Program Application.

Motion passed.

(07-13-23-05)

### **13. To Endorse the Ardens Transportation Plan.**

Mr. Bill Swiatek said Connecting with the Ardens: A Transportation Plan was developed under the guidance of a steering committee that was comprised of local and state representatives and builds upon previous planning work in the Ardens. Continuous public feedback informed the development and selection of context-sensitive, locally preferred alternatives. This public engagement included a Walkable Community Workshop, three in-person workshops, two community-wide surveys, and a parallel youth engagement process which included a separate workshop and survey. Key recommendations from the plan include a suite of traffic calming measures, such as median installations, bioswales, bump outs, speed limit reductions, signage improvements, and intersection and lane reconfigurations, all in an effort to reduce speed and improve safety on Harvey and Veale Roads. To maintain an improved emergency vehicle response, the plan recommends the installation of traffic signal pre-emption equipment on more than a dozen vehicles associated with the Claymont Fire Company. Walking and biking recommendations include the installation of better crossings at key locations in the Ardens and the buildout of a complete pathway network within the villages. Bus recommendations include investing in three priority school and public bus stop locations and providing residents with better east-west bus connections to the Concord Pike Corridor and Claymont Train Station. The

PAC took no action on the item, but received presentations about it and reviewed the plan for jargon. The TAC recommended Council endorse this plan via email vote. The Villages of Arden, Ardencroft, and Ardentown met to endorse the plan at parallel town meetings on June 26<sup>th</sup>. Arden and Ardencroft voted to endorse the plan. While the majority of Ardentown residents at the meeting supported the plan, Ardentown did not take a formal vote due to procedural issues. Ardentown will seek formal endorsement at their next meeting on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Staff recommends that Council endorse the plan.

Mr. Sisson asked if there are any concerns that they will not endorse it. Ms. Zegeye said there is, but seventy-five percent of the community is in favor of the plan, and two of the villages are already in favor of it. It is the WILMAPCO process that when the fiscal year ends, we have to endorse or decline the projects at that time. This is showing our work to the community and the resources that we have used. If any of the villages do not want the recommendations, we will not recommend that DeIDOT go forward with design. This is a concept plan update that would go further if approved. Ms. Patibanda asked if Council can note that they recognize that the village had not voted. Ms. Zegeye said the motion can be crafted to say that.

Mr. Sisson asked if the connections to the Claymont Train Station would be through micro transit or routing. Mr. Swiatek said a feasibility study is recommended for micro-transit and for better pedestrian connections to Route 61, which is on Naaman's Road. Mr. Sisson said DTC will continue to look at this area as part of DART Reimagined.

Mr. O'Connor asked if the equipment for the fire trucks is covered by federal funding. Mr. Swiatek is not sure if any federal pool could cover it, but it is not much money in terms of transportation dollars. It came to about \$50,000. That might be a local effort from the State.

Mr. Tyson Byrne asked to confirm that the Council is endorsing it to the town, but not enacting or adopting it. Ms. Zegeye said Council is endorsing or accepting it. If it is a plan that has gone through a community, Council endorses it. If it is a CMS or a TIP, Council adopts it, because that is your plan. In this case Council is endorsing it because the implementation phase would come not only from working with the community, but from a member agency, and they will take it the next step with us. We are also hoping to have a monitoring committee. Mr. Sisson asked to confirm that there is no commitment to anything beyond this point. Ms. Zegeye confirmed that just like any other plan, the monitoring is what would move this forward.

Mr. Ben Gruswitz said he appreciates the work of WILMAPCO on this, and Mr. Randy Waltermeyer, the consultant from McMahon, and everyone who has worked on it. It was a lot to coordinate three different villages through this process, but it makes sense, because we have a lot of interdependence and a lot of the same issues. It was great to get this kind of assistance.

**ACTION:** On motion by Ms. Charuni Patibanda seconded by Mr. David Edgell the Council endorsed the Ardens Transportation Plan contingent on the Ardentown vote to approve it.

Motion passed.

(07-13-23-06)

## **PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

### **14. DART Reimagined Update**

Ms. Cathy Smith said DART Reimagined is an abbreviation of Reshaping DART Transit Services to Meet the Needs of Today and Beyond. DTC, and all transit agencies, saw a reduction in ridership during the pandemic. Their fixed route is up back to about seventy-five percent of pre-pandemic numbers. The year 2019 is used as a focus of pre-pandemic years. Rail ridership is back to forty-six to fifty percent. Much of the commuting market was lost. In 2022 DART Reimagined was launched to take an inventory of the transit market and what type of service is needed.

The study process is a three-pronged approach. It began with the evaluation period, where they looked at performance metrics of the system, the market analysis, land use, and densities of employment and population. A digital survey was launched March 31<sup>st</sup>, and hard copies were distributed to special interest groups. They are still taking comments. More than 2,440 digital surveys were received. The second piece is to identify opportunities to improve the network system and make final recommendations that can become an implementable plan. After that, the third piece is to achieve an improved transit system. This study had extensive public input and the opportunity for active engagement with different stakeholder groups and communities. An Executive Advisory and a Technical Advisory Committee are helping with this process. Part of the evaluation phase was categorizing the standards, concepts, and guiding principles. Now they are developing an initial draft of their network system redesign, looking at service delivery options, and evaluating routes. In the fall a final network service design will be shared with the public. The final plan will be implemented during the regular service change process. The premise behind this identification phase is to identify the priorities and resources to keep in mind as they go through the alternatives. Limited financial resources present the need to consider choices and tradeoffs related to access to jobs and services, geographic coverage, efficiency, ridership, service quality, and equity. The key strategic areas that were prioritized are establishing the core network, looking at reliability and higher frequency, promoting a system that is easy to use, travel time, looking at non-traditional types of transit service delivery options, such as micro transit, prioritize safety, and infrastructure improvement, enhancing the user experience with technology, and the onboard experience. Another thing that kept coming up is attention to transit supported policy to improve and reimagine the system.

DTC has been collecting information since March and continually going back to edit and revise the system network design. This is a continuous, active, and collaborative process. The Executive Advisory Committee includes representation from many groups and advises on policy directions and community needs. There have been three Executive Advisory Committee meetings to date. There is a Technical Advisory Committee for each county in the State and one for Wilmington. There have been two Technical Advisory Committee Meetings. The TAC includes representation from municipalities, MPOs, Universities, the Hispanic and Latino Community, and the elderly community to look at the technical decisions of what is needed in a reimaged system. The customer engagement continues with presentation and tabling events. A State of the System Report was made and is available to review at [www.dartreimagined.com](http://www.dartreimagined.com). There have been many summer outreach activities with presentations, tabling, and handing out flyers. Comments can be emailed directly to the project email at [info@dartreimagined.com](mailto:info@dartreimagined.com). In August, the Executive and the Technical Advisory Committees will meet, and a final preferred network design will be released to the public. There will be a community workshop held in each county in the City of Wilmington, and one final virtual workshop.

The team is currently working on design and service recommendations. Some of the objectives are to streamline the directness of some of the route alignments, focus the frequency on the most productive corridors, reduce route lengths and improve reliability, consolidate routes, maximize connections, maybe add crosstown service, reallocate unproductive services, and keep routes as familiar as possible. Network Concept 1 is looking at more local routes, streamlining those routes, reducing duplication, and optimizing the existing system. Network Concept 2 is looking at more innovative on-demand, micro transit, and different service delivery options. The team wants to create a hybrid of the two options. This will be finalized by the end of July or early August. It will be presented to the CEO and advisory committees so revisions can be made before being presented at the community workshops in September.

Mr. Sisson said some of the results have been interesting. People's preferences were split between more direct service with more walking and less direct service with less walking. There is not an exact answer to some of the questions being asked. There has been a lot of responsiveness about days of the week coverage and hours of operation. It will be interesting to see what the public says. The challenge is getting people to say they like something. Usually, if they like it, they walk away rather than endorse it. Ms. Smith said some survey results were surprising because you hear a lot about more direct service, but people really want to be closer to their location. They would sacrifice route time to not walk as far. Sixty-one percent of the New Castle County folks were in favor of more frequent service and earlier and later service times. Weekend service was very popular. Mr. Sisson said he saw two reports about connectivity and access. That is important. You can become more direct and more frequent if you have a good pedestrian network. Ms. Patibanda asked if there is visualization of ways to encourage people to leave their cars in favor of transit. Mr. Sisson said one of the interesting things about the survey is that there were a good number of responses from people who do not use the system. The summer outreach events allow the team to go places where they can talk to people and ask why they do not use transit. DTC has some programs to encourage use. Other considerations are the ability to deliver the services, the staffing vacancies, and trying to be more efficient. Relatively speaking, service is inexpensive. Commuters used to ride when the gas prices spiked. In the last couple of years, that did not happen. Ms. Smith said there is interest in micro transit, but people do not know what it is, so there will be an educational effort for that. It is being launched in Newark on August 7<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Sisson explained that you use an app or a phone to request a ride, which may be a shared or individual ride. DTC has been able to get people in ten to fifteen minutes, but Newark is more urban, and the demand is unknown. The goal is to pick up in ten to fifteen minutes. There will be a boundary like Newark to Christiana Mall or a transit hub to connect to the system.

### **15. Newport Train Station Ridership Update**

Mr. Dave Gula said the 2020 Newport Transportation Study looked at making the town walkable. It is already fairly walkable, but recommendations were made such as fixing gaps in the sidewalks. The team also reviewed a 2012 study that looked at what was needed to reopen the train station as a commuter station. A monitoring committee was put in place in 2022. Part of 2023 monitoring committee study was to look at the train station itself and what has changed since 2013. Newport is located between Churchman's Crossing and Wilmington and falls within an area that would be considered a commuter station. Newport is a fairly walkable town where most of the town is within a five-minute walk. There has been some growth and there is planned growth. The Amazon facility is about a twenty-minute walk, but there is a bus route that runs through town and connects to that facility. A business park is within an easy two- or three-minute walk. The County was awarded a RAISE grant for the Newport River Trail, which would come past the station. The Route 5 bus is one of DART's top performing routes and runs within



two blocks of the station, so this could be an important piece of the network. The station infrastructure needs to be reconstructed with high level platforms for ADA compliance. The train is already running on that rail. The town owns some land beneath Route 141 and in other areas around the station for parking. There is only one underpass to cross the Northeast Corridor, which is a challenge. Approval from Amtrak is needed to build on their land. The freight movements of Norfolk Southern and scheduling with SEPTA must be considered. Agency fatigue is a threat. People are tired of working with Amtrak from the Newark Station and working on the Claymont Station. Ridership is down, which is a challenge. Funding is also a challenge.

Nine trains run from Philadelphia to Newark and eight run from Newark to Philadelphia. If the town had a station, they could have service right away. There is no weekend service. A 2013 ridership forecast shows some ridership shift from Churchman's to Newport, but also a lot of new ridership. From the current study, the Amazon Warehouse may influence new riders. Avenue North is on the 202 corridor, but proposed bus service could make that connection. There is a potential increase in ridership if the SEPTA-MARC connection is made. A new ridership modeling effort is underway this summer. The existing layout is three tracks, and the James Street underpass is the only way to cross the tracks safely. On a recent call Amtrak said there is no reason not to have a station in Newport and they provided a phase-based implementation plan. Phase 1 would result in a high-level platform on track 1, with full pedestrian access and parking. Phase 2 would add the platform on track 3. Phase 3 includes Amtrak improvements to increase speeds, and Amtrak building the fourth track (track A), and the platforms will be moved to accommodate it. Our first phase would build a platform along track 1. Our second phase would build a platform on track 3, which would have to correspond with work at Churchman's so the tracks match to serve SEPTA. Phase 3 is a proposed station, a new set of tracks, and shifting the platform. Phase 1, building a platform on one side in Newport, costs \$25 million. Phase 2, an additional platform at Newport and Churchman's Crossing, costs \$45 million. Phase 3, if Amtrak finds the money to do the track separations, would cost \$45 million. We also have to budget for pedestrian improvements to make it easier to access. There is potential for shared parking at a nearby church, at lots under SR 141, at an existing lot that is being leased to the BASF. Some sidewalk and lighting improvements are needed. East Water Street is the path that the Newport Riverfront Trail will take to connect to Newport. It connects to James Street at a busy intersection that needs improvement because there is a lot of heavy truck movement there. Pedestrian improvements are needed for both the train and trail access to downtown. Harvey Hanna created a rendering of the James Street underpass showing possible improvements.

Modeling is being done over the summer. A workshop will be held in the fall. The consultant team was tasked with typing minutes of the call with Amtrak and scheduling another call to discuss the three phases. There will be conversations with DTC and DeIDOT about Amtrak's implementation plan.

Mr. Sisson said none of that is in the Northeast Corridor Plan that goes out to 2037. That does not have enough resources to implement. They told them that you are not getting on track 3. He has heard about the Churchman's platform from them, and questions why they want a platform there if we cannot use the track. If that is \$120 million now, from his experience at Claymont, Fairplay, and Newark, that number is on the very low side. He also questioned the market, because no one can predict if people will go back to work in Philadelphia. There is talk about the monetary investment needed for the work on the tracks between Wilmington and Claymont to improve on-time performance and reliability. Mr. Gula said he has not seen the timing for those improvements. Mr. Sisson said, on the rail side, it is not about money. It is about resources. As they do big projects in New York and Baltimore, agencies cannot get Amtrak to do other

projects. If funding is committed, the project might still be twenty-five years away. Mr. Gula said we had not heard this phased plan from Amtrak, previously. It does require a detailed follow-up.

## **16. Southbridge Transportation Action Plan**

Mr. Bill Swiatek said Southbridge is a neighborhood in Wilmington with about a thousand people. The core study area was the neighborhood, but the team also looked at the area to the east and west of the neighborhood with development in Riverfront East and towards the port as part of the greater study area. This study builds off of the 2021 Neighborhood Action Plan, a 2008 circulation study, and other studies that were done in the area. Four focus areas include traffic and road diet to slow traffic as it comes through Southbridge; slowing, reducing, and rerouting trucks and freight, which are a particular issue in the community because of the land uses around the community; bike and pedestrian connections; and improving transit connections for residents. One more public meeting is planned for July 18<sup>th</sup>. The Steering Committee was comprised of government representatives, and community representatives from the civic association and local CDC. The project was run through the South Wilmington Planning Network, which helped streamline this work. Because it is a disadvantaged community and we needed help with promoting surveys, we had two paid dedicated representatives from the Civic Association that were appointed by the Civic Association to work with us on the study as community liaisons. We also had a local door-to-door survey taker, who worked with the census, surveying for the study. Part one of the community engagement was just confirming some of the vision and needs of the community from those previous efforts. We had survey, workshop, and youth focus group. Part two was selecting the alternatives which included a door-to-door survey that had ninety-three responses. We also had a workshop, youth focus group, and attended an Open Streets event to promote the survey. Part three is a period of final plan review. We had a one workshop, will have a replay of that workshop on July 18<sup>th</sup>, and present the plan to the civic association.

A quick action memo was sent to the City of Wilmington in February with recommendations that could be quickly fixed like signing and striping, “no truck, parking” signage for enforcement, wayfinding and truck routing signs, speed limit signs, and signal retiming. For example, people indicated there was speeding on one block of Claymont Street. The team reviewed Streetlight data to confirm this and recommended installing a stop sign to slow cars as they reach that block. For trucks, we recommend intersection reconfiguration at Terminal Avenue and signage to encourage trucks to use that route. Ms. Patibanda asked if that would alleviate the truck traffic south of Eden Park. Mr. Swiatek said there are recommendations in another study that would help with that such as the Garasches Lane reconfiguration or the Pigeon Point Extension. The long-term solution for trucks is a feasibility study of a truck bypass to connect New Castle Avenue with Christiana Avenue to make it more efficient for trucks to use that route instead of traveling through the Southbridge community. Other recommendations include raised intersections, which were very popular with the residents. Reducing the travel lanes from two northbound and two southbound to one on New Castle Avenue would attach to other planned road diets along Route 9 and South Heald Street. One option closes a block of South Claymont Street and uses the space for more green space, while also eliminating speeding traffic on that street. Tightening intersections on D Street would reduce speeding traffic coming into the community.

Survey results showed one in five people in Southbridge have trouble getting to healthy and affordable grocery shopping. Fourteen percent have trouble getting to their desired job and social activities, and ten percent to healthcare. When compared to county results from WILMAPCO’s Public Opinion Survey, social activities and medical care are about the same, but

Southbridge residents struggle more with getting to their desired job or any job and healthy and affordable grocery shopping. The transit recommendations in this plan focus on those two destinations. The team looked at existing routes, and suggested looking at adding Sunday service to ShopRite, frequency improvements, and increasing community marketing to let the residents know that these routes exist. In the long term, the team recommends looking at potentially shifting some routes into Southbridge. There are four routes serving the Southbridge core. Nine routes serve the Walnut Street corridor. If one or two of them could be shifted into Southbridge so that they make the trip into and out of Wilmington, it would not help with frequency, add one thousand people to that route, and address some of the needs mentioned in the surveys. In terms of next steps, the plan is out for public comment through August 6<sup>th</sup>. A workshop will be held on July 18<sup>th</sup>. We are looking for TAC endorsement in August and hope to be back to Council in September.

Ms. Patibanda said kudos for paying people to be engaged. It is a great incentive and way to get neighbors involved too.

Mr. Dave Edgell said this is timely for DART Reimagined. Mr. Sisson said shifting the route on that corridor is a good idea. Even shifting one of them over would be good. It is close to ShopRite. Ms. Smith said DTC had to fight to get the buses into ShopRite as the store did not want them. Mr. Sisson said getting direct service to grocery stores is key.

Ms. Patibanda said she is interested in hearing more about the truck bypass that was mentioned. Mr. Swiatek said we will need a feasibility study for that. One of the things we were looking at was potentially using right-of-way along I-495. The issue with many of the routes is that there would be an at-grade rail crossing needed, which is a challenge and expensive. There is also potential to put one on the north side of the rail line, but there might be some residential impact there. More study is needed.

### **INFORMATION ITEMS:**

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

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Dave Edgell seconded by Mr. Stephen O'Connor the Council adjourned at 3:54 p.m.

Motion passed

(07-13-23-07)

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