

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
MAY 7, 2020**

The WILMAPCO Council meeting was held virtually via WebEx and conference call.

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

**2. ROLL CALL:**

**Members present:**

Marc Coté, representing DeIDOT Secretary of Transportation, Jennifer L. Cohan  
Connie Holland, Delaware Governor's Appointee  
Herb Inden, representing City of Wilmington Mayor, Michael S. Purzycki  
Heather Murphy, Maryland Governor's Appointee  
Eric Sennstrom, representing Cecil County Executive, Alan McCarthy  
John Sisson, representing Delaware Transit Corporation  
Andrea Trabelsi, representing New Castle County Executive, Matthew Meyer

**Members absent:**

Michael Spencer, representing New Castle County Municipalities  
Dave Warnick, representing Cecil County Municipalities

**Guests, Observers:**

Ian Beam, MDOT  
Tysson Byrne, MDOT  
Marvina Cephas, DNREC  
Tom Fruehstorfer, WILMAPCO PAC Chairperson  
Daniel Janousek, MDOT  
Mike Kaszyski, WILMAPCO PAC Member  
Kevin Racine, WILMAPCO PAC Member  
Jolyon Shelton, DNREC  
Cathy Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

**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, Transportation Planner  
Dawn Voss, Administrative Assistant  
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by Dawn Voss

**3. MINUTES:**

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Sennstrom seconded by Mr. Inden the Council approved the March 12, 2020 Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion passed.

(03-12-20-01)

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

None.

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

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

Mr. John Sisson reported that the Delaware Transit Corporation is working to restore some service beginning on Sunday, May 17. This will coincide with the opening of the Wilmington Transit Hub. DTC will be increasing service to about 80% of their normal service throughout the state. There will be press releases next week with the specifics. Rear-door boarding, no fare collection and limiting capacity on buses to maintain social distancing will continue.

Both Maryland and Delaware legislators are working on bills or resolutions to support the MARC-SEPTA Commuter Rail Extension. The Maryland legislature passed House Bill 1236 for the MARC Train Extension of Service Act which will enable the MTA to study the expansion of service to Perryville, Maryland to connect with SEPTA service in Newark. The bill still needs to be signed by the governor. Delaware legislature has passed the related, House Resolution 81 to direct DelDOT to coordinate with Maryland, Pennsylvania, MARC, SEPTA and Amtrak to connect commuter rail service between the three states. A lot of work has gone into this for a long time whether it is the Third Track Project or the Newark Regional Transportation Center Project. There is a lot of support for this right now for both legislatures to continue dialog and make this work, so we look forward to seeing that coordination continue.

##### **Nominating Committee Report for 2020-2021 Officers:**

Ms. Connie Holland said the committee consisted of Mr. Herb Inden, Ms. Heather Murphy and herself. Their unanimous vote was to keep the Chair and Vice Chair, who are doing an excellent job. Mr. John Sisson and Mr. Eric Sennstrom accept the nominations to continue to serve.

**ACTION:** On motion by Ms. Holland, seconded by Mr. Inden the Council voted Mr. John Sisson continue as Chair and Mr. Eric Sennstrom continue as Vice Chair of the Council.

Motion passed.

(05-07-20-02)

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

Ms. Connie Holland said the Office of State Planning is doing everything in a virtual format. The best way to contact her is via email. They are hoping to have state strategies ready for the cabinet committee to approve June 1<sup>st</sup> to meet their deadline.

Ms. Heather Murphy said that everything is virtual. They are dealing with the shelter in place order and trying to anticipate its impact on revenues. The Governor has said that he plans to veto any bill that costs the state any money, so the bill to extend MARC up into Delaware potentially could be vetoed purely because of the cost to run that service. The governor does not have much more time before he is going to have to act on that legislation.

Mr. Eric Sennstrom said County Executive McCarthy sent a letter of support to both Senator Hansen and Representative Osienski concerning House Concurrent Resolution.

He is pleased the legislation passed in Maryland, moving forward to close that commuter rail gap.

Ms. Andrea Trabelsi reported New Castle County continues to prepare for the launch of the Comprehensive Plan Update. It will probably launch before the next Council meeting. The county is recruiting members for the Youth Planning Board and had connected with staff at WILMAPCO on that subject. They appreciate everyone sharing the information. New Castle County Land Use continues to operate in the virtual world, and it is going well. Mr. Herb Inden said Matt Meyer mentioned that he either talked to Rich Hall or he wants to talk to him about working with the city about the Miller Road Shopping Center. It was addressed in the City of Wilmington Comprehensive Plan Update that they wanted to collaborate to make a plan for that area. Mr. Inden asked Ms. Trabelsi to mention to Mr. Hall that he would like to speak with him about that.

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

- Staff has been doing all of our work through virtual meetings.
- On April 1<sup>st</sup>, staff had the US 202 Concord Pike Workshop. Two-hundred and eighty people registered; however, one-hundred and twenty-five people attended the actual workshop.
- Staff is working with King Creative to create a video script and aerial footage for the Route 9 video.
- Staff provided a presentation on the relationship between public health and planning at the University of Delaware Health Symposium on April 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff participated in a kickoff meeting with DeIDOT and members of the Marshallton Community to implement the Marshallton Circulation Study that was completed by WILMAPCO.
- Staff participated in the APA National Planning Conference, held April 29-May 1.
- The next Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee meeting is set for May 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff participated in a call with our partners DeIDOT, New Castle County and our consultant on May 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss a scope of work addendum for the Churchman's Crossing Plan Update.
- The Wilmington Initiatives continues to hold virtual meetings.
- For the Southern New Castle County Master Plan, the consultant team is completing the traffic modeling of the preferred land use scenario. Results were received in late April. It will be sent to our member agencies for review. A final workshop will be held to present the results of the traffic analysis and project recommendations when we are able to meet in person.
- The Newport Transportation Study project team is working on the preliminary recommendations for the pedestrian and transit improvements based on comments collected from the advisory committee, stakeholders and the public.
- The Governor Printz Virtual Management Advisory Committee meeting to review draft scenarios will be held in late May.
- The Maryland Transportation Alternatives Program call for projects will be April 15<sup>th</sup> through May 29<sup>th</sup>. A Delaware call for projects will be open this fall.

Mr. Marc Coté commended Ms. Zegeye and the team on the April 1<sup>st</sup> workshop. It was the first large public workshop done virtually and he thought it went very well. It gave us hope that it was a good medium to reach out and engage the public. He was impressed with the level of input and professionalism in that workshop.

Ms. Andrea Trabelsi said they were glad to have that Churchman’s Crossing conversation yesterday. It was very helpful, and she is looking forward to the project and someday maybe to have a new TID to really leverage the opportunities of the Churchman’s Crossing area.

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

None.

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

Ms. Heather Dunigan reported the TAC met on March 19 with no action items at that meeting. The TAC had three presentations: one on the UPWP, one on the Maryland, Monroe, MLK Safety Project and one on the Newport Transportation Plan.

At the April 16 TAC meeting, the TAC had two action items. The TAC recommended approval of the FY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program. They also recommended endorsement of the New Castle County Bicycle Plan with one no vote. The TAC had presentations about the Concord Pike Master Plan and Traffic Impacts of Covid-19.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**9. To Adopt the State/Local Cash and In-Kind Commitment for Fiscal Year 2021.**

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said WILMAPCO is required to have 20% match for all Federal funding that is received. This can be contributions through state or local agencies and the match can be in-kind or cash. Member agency cash commitments are:

State of Maryland	\$ 13,090
Cecil County	\$ 4,400
State of Delaware	\$412,451
New Castle County	\$ 31,500
City of Wilmington	\$ 11,796

The remaining match is in-kind, through the agreement with Cecil County and the Town of Elkton, and the in-kind amount for the FY 2021 UPWP is \$8,690. That would entail one hundred and forty-six hours of in-kind services from the staff of Cecil County and the Town of Elkton. The PAC did not take any action on this agenda. The TAC reviewed the resolution at their April 16<sup>th</sup> meeting and the WILMAPCO staff recommends the adoption of the State and Local Cash and In-Kind Commitment for FY 2021. The Federal Highway Administration has a draft of the report and they are awaiting Council approval of the UPWP to send an approval letter of the FY 2021 UPWP.

Ms. Heather Murphy said because their MPO money goes through FTA, they must have the FTA approve the in-kind portion before their grant can be approved through FTA and get the money for WILMAPCO. Ms. Zegeye said that can be done, but because a large portion of the WILMAPCO region is in Delaware, we abide by the Federal Highway Administration’s approval process. The in-kind agreement and associated hours were submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and they had no issues or questions and are just waiting for Council’s actions. In the past, the Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations have come together to see who the lead agency is in addressing

approval for the region. Either way, we have the approval from the FHWA, but if we need FTA approval, we can get that too. Ms. Murphy does not expect a problem, but FTA will want to see the documentation and if they do not agree, they can work with Federal Highway Delaware Division.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Sennstrom seconded by Mr. Coté the Council approved the Resolution to Adopt the State/Local Cash and In-Kind Commitment for Fiscal Year 2021.

Motion passed.

(05-07-20-03)

#### **10. To Adopt the Draft FY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).**

Ms. Zegeye said the FY 2021 UPWP describes the planning activities in the WILMAPCO region from July 2020 through June 2021. Since the last Council meeting, the financial numbers and the descriptions in documents have not changed. There are five new projects that would require consultants in the FY 2021 UPWP. Those are the Statewide Truck Parking Study, the Port of Wilmington Circulation Study, the First/Final Mile Freight Network Development Study, the City of New Castle Transportation Plan Update, and the Union Street Reconfiguration and Streetscape Improvement Study in Wilmington. The WILMAPCO PAC approved the public participation and public education portion of the UPWP at their February meeting. The draft was also available on the WILMAPCO website from March 25 through May 1 for public review and public comment. The TAC recommended Council approval of the UPWP at their April meeting. WILMAPCO Staff also recommends the Council adopt the UPWP. Once approved, it will be submitted to DelDOT and MDOT in May. We will be seeking approval from Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations and implementation will begin in July 2020.

Ms. Andrea Trabelsi asked if any comments were received from the month it was available. Ms. Zegeye replied that we have heard from consultants looking at some projects that would be coming in the next fiscal year. There were a few website hits that someone looked at the draft UPWP, but there were no comments from the public.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Sennstrom seconded by Ms. Holland the Council adopted the Draft FY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Motion passed.

(05-07-20-04)

#### **11. To Endorse the New Castle County Bicycle Plan**

Ms. Heather Dunigan reviewed the feedback received from the Nonmotorized Working Group, the TAC and the public on the draft New Castle County Bicycle Plan and explained how comments have been addressed.

*Introduction:* Language was added from the Nonmotorized Working Group, to clarify the plan addresses e-bikes and similar options based on local restrictions.

*Bicycle Transportation Network:* The maps are shown at the county planning district level rather than the council district. Some recommendations on the maps were modified based on Nonmotorized Working Group feedback, including changes in the Mill Creek area, City of Newark, and Wilmington based on recent planning. A note was added to the

map between New Castle and Delaware City that riverfront alignment might be added in the future. New Castle County recommended adding a map that showed the gaps in connectivity but adding that map would be too cluttered for the printed document but the information can be made available via GIS.

*Safety Through Design, Maintenance and Enforcement:* Some wayfinding recommendations were added. The definition of bicycle boulevards was expanded. A recommendation from New Castle County to make uniform branding and wayfinding for all jurisdictions was not included because of the importance of having local trail identities. Recommendations for changes in speed and detailed landscape design were not added.

*Bicycle Elements in Land Use Planning:* The Nonmotorized Working Group requested information be added about complete communities and pathway-oriented development as well as recommendations that local governments adopt this bicycle plan into their comp plans. The TAC recommended clarification that the plan applies to zoning, planning and development. These recommendations have been addressed in the document.

*Providing Bicycle Access to Transit:* The recommendation that future MARC service have bike access and a reference to Amtrak bicycle access were added to the document.

*Expand Equitable Access:* The TAC recommended that the maps be updated with the most recent bicycle routes. The maps in this section have been corrected.

*Bicycle Parking and Other End of Trip Facilities:* It was explained that this is about zoning as well as land use planning and development.

One public comment expressed concern that bicycle routes will recommend the removal of car parking, but Ms. Dunigan responded to this individual that this plan does not necessarily recommend that, and such decisions are on an individual planning basis.

Nonmotorized Working Group reviewed the document and overall, they were pretty happy. The TAC reviewed the document and there was one no vote from New Castle County who had a concern that the TAC was voting while still receiving public comments; the rest of the TAC voted in favor.

Ms. Trabelsi thanked Ms. Dunigan and everyone for developing this plan. The efforts are appreciated especially since the statewide bike plan was prepared and guides much of what has been done creating a regional or countywide bike plan. Ms. Trabelsi explained that the no vote from the county representative on the TAC was due to concerns about having the opportunity to review the comments before voting, but we now understand those changes. Ms. Trabelsi asked, as we look forward toward implementation and the potential need to update, especially the infrastructure and master plan map elements of that plan, what the process will be, because she does hope to continue working closely with Ms. Dunigan. Ms. Dunigan replied that the map is a changing target. Even as the plan was being developed the map was changing and there are a number of master plans underway that would alter it in the future. Ms. Dunigan would like to see the plan updated minimally every 4 years as part of the RTP update process. Major changes in between can be added through the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group, TAC, and Council. Also, language in the report indicates network maps in the plan do not

preclude other routes that may be identified through transportation planning and land use development. Ms. Trabelsi said she looks forward to continuing coordination especially as the county moves forward with their Comprehensive Plan update. She confirmed she will continue working with Ms. Dunigan who will then work with the Nonmotorized Working Group. Ms. Dunigan agreed that the Nonmotorized Working Group will be the forum for discussion related to implementation and monitoring changes to the plan. Also, monitoring will be part of the Regional Progress Report we develop at least every four years prior to the RTP update.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Inden seconded by Mr. Coté the Council endorsed the New Castle County Bicycle Plan.

Motion passed.

(05-07-20-05

### **PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

#### **12. Concord Pike Master Plan**

Mr. Dave Gula said the most recent activity regarding the Concord Pike Master Plan was the virtual workshop on April 1<sup>st</sup>, which went very well. One hundred and twenty-five people logged in with multiple people in some households, so the number might have been higher. Attendees were given thirty minutes to log in, ask questions, and verify their connections. We were fortunate to have Rich Hall available to give a brief introduction. Andrew Bing was the moderator and the project team was involved in putting together the presentation. The presentation included a welcome, introduction, project background, new information, review of some older information, then a moderated question and answer period. The program lasted about two hours.

During the virtual workshop, poll questions were asked, starting with some introductory questions about who was watching the workshop as lead in for later questions about the material. Goals and objectives were reviewed. Nothing had changed, but the team wanted to remind people that throughout this process the team has been seeking their input. The goals and objectives were formed from the input received from stakeholder interviews and visioning workshops. Also, the team wanted to remind attendees that we are not redevelopers, but if redevelopment occurs, we want them to have input. They were reminded that they selected images on what the preferred redevelopment might look like and that is guiding the plan. There was a lot of outreach for this project, starting with stakeholder interviews throughout 2017 for the market study. An information session was held in the middle of the summer (July 25, 2018) with two hundred attendees. Community visioning and focus groups were held in November 2018. A Wiki Map was used for online public engagement for three months. A public workshop with ninety attendees was March 20, 2019. A third public workshop was on December 5, 2019 with one hundred and thirty-five attendees. Then, this virtual workshop was on April 1<sup>st</sup> with one hundred and twenty-five attendees.

After the December 5<sup>th</sup> workshop a survey was posted online in an effort to get more information from people who had attended the workshop and also to offer the opportunity for those who could not attend to review the workshop materials. Among the questions asked was, "What is your greatest concern for the future of the corridor?" Two hundred people responded. Traffic and congestion was cited most, with 49% of the responses. Overdevelopment was second with 20%. The second question was, "What could improve your quality of life on the corridor?" Reduced traffic and congestion again

was the number one answer with 29% of the responses, followed by more green space/open space at 14%. There were two hundred and sixteen responses to this question, and many different opinions. This information will be used as we go through the plan and all of the comments will be in the appendix. The poll asked if there are things people strongly agree or disagree with at the workshop. One of the top things people agreed with is the need to have a plan to control the growth of the corridor. Things people disagree with included 13% that need more information, so they just are not sure at this point. There were 10% that said the plan did not reflect their or their community's wishes. It is hard to find consensus and information is still being collected. After this recent workshop we have another survey open and results should be compiled by the next meeting.

Preliminary land use recommendations were reviewed. The slideshow will be available and Council members can call staff with any questions.

Mr. Dan Blevins said using public feedback to shape the transportation side of the plan has resulted in a multi-modal approach. People want other modes of transportation available along the corridor. An interactive map available on the project page on the WILMAPCO website lists proposed projects grouped by mode; roadway, bike/pedestrian, intersections and transit. Displayed on the map are the potential bicycle and pedestrian improvements on the corridor. The project team has had conversations with DART about bus service on Route 202, making improvements around the existing bus stops, finding better east-west connections, re-exploring some options for routes into Pennsylvania, and some different signal improvements for buses.

At the December workshop the team promised a motor vehicle analysis to show, current conditions and what happens if there is development to 202 North, the Concord Mall, or the Brandywine Town Center. The analysis looked at how much the corridor can handle before there are intersection and congestion issues. The approach included every signalized intersection on the corridor and working very closely with DeIDOT to get all the information possible for an intersection by intersection analysis to answer the following three questions.

*How will the intersections operate with various levels of redevelopment?* Using Synchro to model, different iterations of traffic volume were analyzed based on potential future development activity including existing conditions, a baseline which is the forecasted background traffic if we do nothing, the current by-right development; a proposed low level of development and a proposed high level of development. Looking at that baseline, by-right, the low and the high future growth, traffic volume increases roughly 15% for the first two options. A technical report is posted on the website with the varying levels of intensity. For the presentation, seconds of delay per intersection were added to the graphic, because travel time resonates with people more than the percentages. Eight to fifteen seconds of delay is added depending on the level of intensity of growth, at each of the intersections along the corridor. These scenarios were examined to determine how many of these intersections will have a Level of Service (LOS) of E or F, which is failure according to county and DeIDOT codes. The baseline scenario will have five intersections with LOS of E or F. By-right development, low zoning and high zoning add a few intersections to that that threshold over the time period.

*How will additional roadway and bicycle/pedestrian connections help the congestion along the corridor?* In addition to the land use scenarios, different transportation options were considered including add nothing to the corridor; add some enhancements to the



local vehicle network; enhancing the bicycle/pedestrian network; and some multimodal improvements at intersections. Then about twenty-five intersections were analyzed to determine how many will function at LOS A through C, D, or E and F. If nothing is done, about thirteen intersections have LOS E or F. If some additional roadway connections and some bike connections are added, there are fewer LOS E or F intersections. A more detailed chart of these LOS Results is available on the WILMAPCO website.

*How can we improve intersections to provide those multi-modal improvements that people want along the corridor?* The plan will have potential treatments to the intersections, but there will be a tradeoff. Adding those treatments, will add delays for motorists. They can provide benefits for pedestrians, reduce interactions, and improve access to bus stops but anything that will help with bicycle/pedestrian movements will have negative impact on motorized traffic. Poll questions sought feedback about the public's comfort with the proposed changes and how they affect motor vehicle delay as well as how likely they are to walk or bike along the corridor, because that will help shape the improvements proposed along the corridor. All the preliminary recommendations that we have can be found on the website.

Mr. Gula continued that during the workshop, project implementation was explained. Some of these projects are going to be long term and expensive, while some will be short term and less expensive. Determining which agency will be responsible for each project determines how they are handled. The approved projects included in the plan will become part of the WILMAPCO Regional Transportation Plan, at which point they may move into different funding streams. It was also explained that some of these projects are dependent on development or redevelopment as part of a TIS or TID recommendations. These are not completely publicly funded projects. There are funding alternatives for some of the smaller projects. Some may go through DelDOT funding and transportation funding, or perhaps recreational or community funding. As projects are recommended, there will be a matrix for each project and how they potentially could be funded.

In terms of prioritization, the team may use some tools that are already available. DelDOT has a bicycle mobility tool outline in their 2018 Blueprint for a Bicycle Friendly Delaware, which places prioritization on projects that connect people to destinations, separates bicyclists from traffic, and turns a stressful route to a more comfortable route. The key step is to develop locally driven plans and projects. All the projects will be prioritized through WILMAPCO's current project prioritization, which will go back to the tenets of our Regional Transportation Plan. With this project we just want people to be a little more comfortable with how we work.

Monitoring and performance measuring will be very important to keep the implementation of this plan on track. Similar monitoring is in place for the SR 9 Project and the key is to bring the public, stakeholders and agencies together yearly to talk about the metrics that were set and how they are being met, look at the changes in traffic and how the projects can move forward. The public has been polarized about this plan and getting them more involved, hopefully will get them on the side of the project.

The survey is available on the project webpage until May 29<sup>th</sup>. So, we want to keep circulating the survey link to get as much feedback as possible. We are not sure when our final workshop will be. We prefer to have it in person since it will be the last workshop for this project, but since we have restrictions due to Covid-19 we are going to hold off as long as we can. If we have to go virtual, we will let the Council know well in

advance. Once the ban on large gatherings is lifted in Delaware, we will need at least five weeks to prepare for the workshop. Any comments can be directed to Mr. Gula. Staff is working on a draft of the plan. We hope to have a draft to distribute to partner agencies by mid-June. We want to thank DeIDOT as we had a lot of participation from DeIDOT Planning staff, and we had really good coordination with the New Castle County Land Use staff. We are fortunate to have the partnerships that we do.

Ms. Trabelsi asked for the demographics of participants, and if there was a sense of getting more participation from non-traditional participants. Mr. Gula responded that all along higher age bracket groups have participated in the workshops and the polling question we asked during the virtual workshop found the same. The largest number of participants were probably 50-65 and over, which is one of the key demographics for the area. One of the things the team heard in the past about a thirty-year plan is participants saying that they will not be here in thirty years. So, we were trying to stress at this virtual workshop is that there are projects that could be implemented much more quickly.

### **13. Traffic Impacts of COVID-19**

Mr. Blevins said to see the impact of Covid-19 on the transportation system, he took some comparisons of data available from the National Performance Measurement Research Data Set (NPMRDS), which measures travel time data similar to the Bluetooth data and other data collected throughout Delaware. Delaware shut down on March 13<sup>th</sup> and Maryland on March 5<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Blevins looked at data from March, focusing on AM and PM peaks, a couple of weeks before and after the shutdown to do a year over year comparison between what happened in 2019 and the same period in 2020. Travel times and speeds were examined for local major corridors, looking at metrics seen up to this point. The average cited by both MDOT and DeIDOT is traffic is down 40-50%. Peak periods are different because of work patterns, but overall, many AADTs are down about that percentage over the last six weeks. A day by day breakdown of the PM peak, 4:00 to 6:00 PM, from the last weekend in February through March compared these corridors before, then after everything was shut down.

Looking back to the third week in February, traffic was down slightly on the interstates and US routes in New Castle County. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, Maryland declared a State of Emergency, then on March 13<sup>th</sup> Delaware shut down. Average travel time is down roughly 20%, meaning it is 20% faster to get from point A to point B on the routes that were examined. On I-95 in Delaware, it appeared some of the peaks were higher on week three and four in February. Some further research found that there were some incidents, such as crashes along I-95 at those times, which caused those spikes. There was a large decline on I-95, to almost 30-35% of traffic being off on some days, which is slightly more than the overall system. During this peak period traffic going through Delaware takes twenty-three minutes instead of twenty-nine, as it did previously.

Arterials are much the same. Travelling on Kirkwood Highway from Newark to Wilmington shows the same pattern. When the State of Emergency was declared, you see a 21-22% decline throughout the area. Travelling this distance along Kirkwood Highway went from about twenty-five minutes to twenty minutes. In the morning peak on many of the corridors, from the moment the State of Emergency was declared on March 13<sup>th</sup>, travel times actually get worse through that weekend due to panic shopping. Roughly, there is about 15-20% change in most corridors. US 202 was running much higher year over year until around the third week of March, then you see two minutes reduction in travel time. US 40 in Delaware saw roughly a 16-18% decline, or about four

extra minutes, in travel time. US 40 in Cecil County from the Delaware line to the Susquehanna River had roughly the same travel results, but a bit earlier as the emergency was declared earlier in Maryland. US 9 in Sussex was unaffected by the third week of March, but by the 4th week of March caught up with the pattern that we saw throughout the rest of the state, and country.

April data will be added once it is available. We looked back into February to see if there were greater trends and will evaluate this as things get back to normal, but there is some question of what normal will look like. Looking at traffic impact studies and collecting data for them is key to many projects. On US 40 and Scotland Drive, the AM and PM peaks were 2100 vehicles in an hour, but now is 929, so it is more than 50% off on traffic. The question is when can we get back to do some of these counts? DelDOT has talked with the TMC about looking at the loop data that we can gather. April 2020 Park and Ride Park and Pool usage was down roughly 87% looking at some of the major locations such as train stations and Peoples Plaza. Brandywine Springs Park and Delcastle Recreation Center have had numbers increase, but that is obviously people using the parks for some outdoor recreation. One of the big concerns related to our data collection activities is that they will probably be off for quite some time, which impacts some of the ongoing studies and projects that are supposed to begin in the near future.

#### **14. Transit Impacts of COVID-19**

Mr. Bill Swiatek spoke about some of the impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the public bus system and also how the reduction in services affects coverage for vulnerable populations in the WILMAPCO region. During a pandemic, public transit can be seen as sort of a dichotomy in that it can be a conduit for the spread of virus as buses are enclosed spaces. Virus could spread if buses are not cleaned, if people do not cover their mouths, or through contact with cash. On the other hand, it is a form of essential transportation. At the NPC conference, Clarence Anthony from the National League of Cities gave a keynote about public transit as an essential service for many of the most vulnerable people in our society. However, it is at risk of being cut across the country. This is not the first pandemic and from an historic perspective, DART and Cecil Transit and other agencies across the country are doing their best to keep buses running and clean. One hundred years ago cities were grappling with the same thing in that pandemic. How can we avoid crowding on the buses, but keep them running so essential workers can get to their jobs?

Delaware reduced service to basically a modified Saturday schedule, plus or minus a couple of lines. Overall, there are about 38% of normal daily runs in New Castle County. Also, it is free for patrons. First, no cash was accepted and now it is free for all the riders. There is physical distancing on the buses. Riders must wear face covering in keeping with all the state recommendations for being out in public at this time. DART is running extra "timing" buses on some of the busier routes to maintain physical distancing and still get the riders to their destinations if the route is busier than usual. Lastly, riders that have been out of state or potentially exposed have been asked not to ride.

Cecil County has similar measures in place. There is reduced service operational. The Elkton to Newark Connection and Commuter Connection lines are down. The Glasgow Connection route is operating as demand response only. Anyone who wants to ride that route, needs to call, giving at least an hour's notice, and a bus will come and pick them up. There is no weekend service in Cecil County. Face coverings have been required and riders with potential exposure to the virus are banned from riding.

During these times, ridership has been declining. In New Castle County month to month ridership was up to around 500,000 rides in the December to February, and it is down to around 157,000 in April. Cecil County saw the same type of decline, from about 5,500 riders in the past few months down to 1,700 in April.

Another aspect of transit we wanted to review is the current coverage in terms of a high-level look at accessibility and connectivity for those who are most vulnerable in our communities. Data was compiled about food deserts, particularly access and frequency of buses that run to supermarkets that also go through food deserts. Also, data was compiled about areas of social determinates of health concern, and then just the access and frequency of all buses. Much of what was found was related to the structure of the routes themselves and does not necessarily reflect the pandemic service as much as how these routes operate and how the neighborhoods are situated near major roads. Food deserts are low-income areas that are far away from a supermarket. WILMAPCO developed a methodology that used the criteria developed by the US Department of Agriculture. It was slightly modified in the approach to identifying the geographic areas that are food deserts. We took this approach that we had in the 2019 Transportation Justice Plan and the food deserts that were identified there and used it for this analysis.

Looking at a rough walking distance of a quarter of a mile with no obvious barriers to the bus stop, it was found that 80% of the households within food deserts are within walking distance of a bus stop that has direct access to a supermarket. In comparison, in New Castle County fewer than 50% of people are in walking distance of any bus stop. Some of the areas that don't have that access, Murray Manor in suburban New Castle County just outside of Newark, and another neighborhood near the airport are standouts where a lot of homes are too far from the main road to access the bus. Another consideration is frequency, or how frequently these services operate to these food deserts and then to the supermarket. A bus stop with a thirty-minute wait is generally good with the services today. Then there are buses that operate every hour or so. It was found that 65% of households in food deserts are both accessible, in walking distance, and served by a relatively good frequency bus to get to a supermarket.

In Cecil County there is a food desert just west of Elkton. It is a low-density development of about two hundred households and the poverty rate is high, around 37%. The majority of the homes that are scattered here are well outside of walking distance to the stop on US 40 for the cross-county connector. Only 4% of the households in this particular food desert are in walking distance to access a supermarket. This is the only route currently operating regularly and it operates about every hour.

Murry Manor, a trailer park just off Route 2 (Kirkwood Highway) east of Newark is serviced by bus Route 6. Residents living at the back end of this trailer park have to walk about one mile to get to those stops on Kirkwood Highway. Some people may be able to make this walk, but for someone who is not able bodied or carrying a few bags of groceries may struggle with it.

The other layer of analysis was the social determinants of health (SDOH) analysis. Mr. Jake Thompson assembled a data report that looked at developing this index for areas of SDOH concern. This methodology was developed in partnership with Nemours and working through our Route 9 Monitoring Committee, which we then used at a regional level. It looks at a number of indicators directly related to health outcomes including problems like poverty rate, education, minority segregation, employment, home

ownership, tenure, single-parent households, food deserts and so forth. Areas that have higher points based on those measures are of most concern from a public health perspective. These areas include a couple of places outside of Elkton, some in northern New Castle County outside of Wilmington, much of Wilmington and the Route 9 corridor.

In this analysis it was found that within that area of concern, 91% of households are within and easy walk to a bus service. This refers to any bus service, not just those with direct links to a supermarket. With frequency factored in, 86% were both accessible via an easy walk to the bus stop and served by a route with good frequency of about every half an hour. The only issue was found on the Route 55, which is on Old Baltimore Pike. That route is operating about every hour or so, which may be fine for the residents there, but it may be something to review.

Cecil County has a couple of areas of SDOH concern. In Elkton, only 30% of those households are within easy walking distance to the cross-county service. Fortunately, Glasgow service is operational as an on-demand service. That service brings that number up to 78%. Hollingsworth Manor is completely covered by that Glasgow bus service. It is very important that route is online, because it provides much better access to the bus from a walking distance in these areas.

Mr. Swiatek expressed thanks to both DART and Cecil Transit for quickly and willingly providing data for him to work with. He has been sharing this data with DART as it has been coming out. Mr. Swiatek only just completed the Cecil County analysis and plans to share the analysis and interactive maps with that transit agency.

Ms. Trabelsi asked where the maps are available. Mr. Swiatek said he can make the maps available to Council members. He has not made them available publicly, but only sent them to the transit agencies so far. There should be discussion about what we want to do with this information. We can turn it into a data report after the situation has slowed down and we have a more complete picture of what has happened, or we could certainly create a web page and put those links up there and try to keep them updated.

Mr. Sisson said there has been discussion of a task force looking at why minority populations have been hit harder by the pandemic and this information might be helpful to that task force. Mr. Sisson asked if the conditions of the walk to bus stops have been evaluated to see if the facilities are in place to make the walk doable. Mr. Swiatek responded we do not have information at that level of detail. This does not factor in ADA. It was simply looking at distance and from the aerial photo perspective to see if there are any obvious barriers that would keep you from that stop, like a railroad track or tree line. Mr. Swiatek agrees that some really detailed data about the access to the walk is needed, or maybe even some field work to go out and see what that walk looks like.

Mr. Côté asked to receive a copy of the maps, particularly to look at what we can do to improve that pedestrian connection out to transit to bring all those users to normal transit service in an identified food desert.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS:**

### **15. DeIDOT's and MDOT's Administrative Modification Request Letters**

**ADJOURNMENT:** Ms. Trabelsi made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Herb Inden seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:31 a.m.

**ATTACHMENTS:** (0)