

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 23, 2024**

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, called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Members present:

John Sisson, representing Delaware Transit Corporation
Dan Janousek, representing Geoff Anderson Maryland Department of Transportation Chief
Timothy Lucas, representing City of Wilmington Mayor, Michael S. Purzycki
Stephen O'Connor, representing Cecil County Executive, Danielle Hornberger
Charuni Patibanda, representing New Castle County Executive, Matthew Meyer
Pam Steinebach, representing DelDOT Secretary of Transportation, Nicole Majeski
Eric Thompson, Mayor of Elsmere, representing New Castle County Municipalities

Members absent:

David Edgell, Office of State Planning and Delaware Governor's Appointee
Charlestown Commissioner, Cecil County Municipalities

Guests, Observers:

Jasmine Champion, Federal Highway Administration
Enos Han, FHWA Delaware Division
Taylor Englert, DNREC
Mike Kaszyski, PAC Chair
Derrick Sexton, MDOT
Cathy Smith, DTC
Marilyn Smith, Dover/Kent MPO
Peter Weir, OED
Kelly Williams, City of Wilmington

Staff members:

Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
Sharen Elcock, Executive Assistant
Elizabeth Espinal, Administrative Assistant
Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner
Jacob Thompson, Senior Planner
Dawn Voss, Outreach Coordinator
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by Elizabeth Espinal.

3. MINUTES:

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Dan Janousek seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council approved the March 14, 2024, Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion passed.

(05-23-24-01)

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

None.

NOMINATING REPORT FOR FY 2025-2026

5. Ms. Pamela Steinebach mentioned the nominating committee named Mr. John Sisson as Council Chair for another term and Mr. Stephen O'Connor as Council Vice Chair.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Tim Lucas seconded by Mr. Eric Thompson the Council approved the member nominations for FY 2025-2026.

Motion passed.

(05-23-24-02)

COUNCIL MEMBERS' AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

6. Chairperson's Report:

Mr. John Sisson reported that on the DART side, they started their Spring service change this week. DART now has a service in one direction to the Hope Center in New Castle County, which they are excited about. Additionally, there is a short-term shutdown, lasting several months, at Fairplay Station due to necessary Amtrak corridor work. The only feasible way to handle this is to shut down the station.

Beach bus service also started this week, so if you're heading to the beach, please remember to use the DART beach service, which is the fastest and cheapest way to get around down there. DART is also working on the Fall service change coming up, which will include potential service cuts based on the findings from the DART Reimagined report. Extensive outreach efforts will be undertaken around these changes.

Council Member's Reports:

Ms. Charuni Patibanda highlighted that New Castle County introduced a redevelopment ordinance. It was presented at the PLUS committee on May 22nd and discussed again in the evening at the Kirkwood Highway Advisory Committee. The feedback received has been very positive, and significant community outreach has been conducted. The ordinance is expected to have a considerable impact on the corridors of New Castle County. Ms. Patibanda expressed excitement about the possibility of including WILMAPCO's public comments and emphasized this point for the Council's consideration.

Ms. Pamela Steinebach from DeIDOT stated that they are currently in the process of conducting public workshops for the Long-Range Transportation Plan. While these workshops are now completed, the public comment period remains open. She mentioned that she could provide the link for public input which is: <https://publicinput.com>

Ms. Steinebach also noted that she attended the inter-agency meeting for the preferred alternatives for the Bay Bridge Crossing Tier 2 on May 22nd. She informed everyone that the Notice of Intent (NOI) is expected to be published in the summer or fall of this year. Following this, the development of alternatives will occur, with details to be finalized by spring of next year. The preferred alternative is anticipated to be identified by July 2025, with the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) expected in October 2025. Public hearings are

scheduled for December 2025, and the final decision is projected for summer or fall of 2026. She concluded by mentioning that the meeting was very informative and that she had no further updates.

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

- On April 10th the Churchman's Crossing Monitoring Committee met and held a public meeting on May 15th.
- On April 19th Staff participated in the Wilmington Earth Day event with Tropo.
- On April 23rd staff participated in the Delaware Strategy for Electric Vehicle Charging and Subtractor Working Group.
- On April 24th the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee met.
- On April 29th staff participated in YWCA Delaware webinar about transportation equity.
- On May 1st the second CTP/TIP workshop was held in Middletown Town Hall.
- On May 6th the Ardens Monitoring Committee met.
- On May 7th staff participated in FHWA resiliency exchange for Coastal DOTs and MPOs.
- On May 9th the Claymont Area Master Plan Advisory Committee met.
- On May 11th staff participated in the Open Streets Event Wilmington for Newcastle Ave.
- On May 13th the Transportation Justice Working Group met.
- On May 16th the Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee met.
- Also, on May 16th staff participated in the Downes Elementary Bike to School Day.
- On May 17th staff participated in the Newark Bike to Work Day.
- On May 20th the Claymont Area Master Plan public workshop was held.
- On May 21st the Newport Transportation Plan Modeling Workshop meeting was held.
- On May 22nd the East Elkton Plan Steering Committee met.
- On June 3rd the next Ardens Monitoring Committee meeting is scheduled.
- On June 4th staff will be attending FRA Long Distance Service Study Working Group meeting.
- On June 5th staff will be hosting the 2024 Delmarva Freight Summit.
- On June 10th the Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan Advisory Committee will hold a public workshop
- On June 12th the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee will hold a public workshop.
- On June 20th the annual Wilmington Initiatives Public Workshop will be held at the City County Building Lobby.

Ms. Zegeye concluded by informing every one of the status of the April financial report which shows 76% of the budget has been expended.

Ms. Patibanda added a comment, thanking DeIDOT and Pam and requested that Ms. Steinebach give a special shout out to Sarah for the Middletown community outreach meeting. It was well attended, and she believed it was much appreciated that folks were there to answer questions. Despite the challenges, she particularly appreciated Sarah's presence.

Ms. Steinebach responded, expressing her gratitude and shared that she felt bad for being on vacation that day but acknowledged that Sarah always does a great job. She assured the Council that she would send that message of appreciation forward.

8. Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Report:

Mr. Mike Kaszyski reported on the PAC meeting held on April 15th, 2024. The meeting had a quorum, with Mr. Kaszyski present in the office and seven others joining via Zoom. Attendees

included Tina Merrill from DNREC and Sarah Lester from Cornerstone West, who is a prospective PAC member and may be formally brought into the PAC at the next meeting.

The meeting began with an executive staff report delivered by Ms. Tigist Zegeye, who provided a brief overview of updates from the last Council hearing on March 14th, as well as information about upcoming workshops. These included the TIP/CTP session scheduled for April 16th and a subsequent meeting in Middletown on May 1st.

Following the staff report, the PAC members addressed two action items. The first item involved reviewing the Public Outreach section of the Draft FY 2025 UPWP, and the second item entailed reviewing the Draft FY 2025-2028 TIP. Both items were unanimously endorsed by the PAC.

The members also received a presentation on the Kirkwood Highway Corridor Land Use & Transportation Plan by Mr. Dave Gula. During the discussion, Ms. Lester asked a question regarding the eastern end of the project as it relates to Union Street. Mr. Gula clarified that the project's connection ends in Elsmere. There were also discussions on how the corridor may relate to the Newark TID and speed controls along Kirkwood Highway. The meeting concluded after these discussions.

9. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Report:

Ms. Heather Dunigan said that the TAC met on April 18th to discuss many of the action items on today's agenda, including recommending amendments to the Beech Street Maintenance Building and Salem Church Road, US40, from Salem Church Rd. to Walther Rd projects. Additionally, there was a presentation on the UPWP funding and related information, which is also recommended for approval.

The TAC recommended the adoption of the FY2025-2028 TIP and noted that there were no actionable public comments received that would necessitate changes to the document. TAC members did not perceive any comments that would trigger changes to the document. There were also presentations from New Castle County on the New Castle County Sustainability Plan, as well as an update on the Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan.

At the May 16th meeting, the TAC recommended amending the TIP and RTP to include the Wilmington Riverfront Infrastructure Project. The May meeting featured presentations on the 2024 CMAQ Performance Plan Update and the Claymont Area Master Plan.

ACTION ITEMS:

10. To Adopt the State/Local Cash Commitment for Fiscal Year 2025.

Ms. Tigist Zegeye presented the resolution outlining the state and local cash commitments for funding the FY2025 UPWP. She explained that federal planning funds require a 20% match by the state and/or local entities. This match can be provided either in cash or in-kind services. For FY2025 UPWP, all state and local matches will be in cash. The agreed-upon cash commitments are as follows:

\$16,309 from the state of Maryland (MDOT)
\$16,309 from Cecil County
\$668,897 from the state of Delaware (DeIDOT)
\$31,500 from New Castle County
\$11,796 from the City of Wilmington

Ms. Zegeye noted that this action did not go to the Public Advisory Committee (PAC), but the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) reviewed the resolution. She recommended that the Council adopt the state and local cash commitment for the FY2025 UPWP. She concluded by offering to answer any questions.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Charuni Patibanda and seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council adopts the State/Local Cash Commitment for the FY2025 UPWP.

Motion passed.

(05-23-24-03)

11. To Adopt the Draft FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Ms. Tigist Zegeye presented the FY25 UPWP, outlining the planning activities that WILMAPCO will perform in fiscal year 2025, from July 2024 through June 2025. She highlighted that the total budget for the program this fiscal year is \$3.7 million, with approximately \$1.5 million allocated for consultant work.

Ms. Zegeye emphasized new projects in the FY25 UPWP, including the First/Final Mile Freight Network, the New Castle County Strategic Action Plan, the Augustine Cut-off Corridor for Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Improvements Phase 2, the Rocky Run Pathway Underpass Feasibility Study, and the Maryland Route 272 Corridor Study. She noted that ongoing projects continue to monitor land use and transportation plans and corridor plans from previous years.

Ms. Tigist Zegeye mentioned that the WILMAPCO PAC approved the public participation and public education portion of the FY25 UPWP at their April meeting. The draft UPWP was available on the WILMAPCO website for public review and comment from April 3rd to May 13th, during which three comments were received. The first comment supported the Maryland 272 Corridor Study and requested WILMAPCO to allocate the full \$250,000 for the project. The second comment, from an attendee of the Kirkwood Highway workshop, inquired about the lack of proposed sidewalks. Ms. Zegeye explained that the first public workshop was intended to gather feedback, and this concern would be communicated to the appropriate project partners. The third comment, from the Village of Ardencroft, supported the UPWP, specifically the \$25,000 allocation for the Ardens Transportation Plan and Monitoring Committee, and expressed gratitude for WILMAPCO's commitment to plan development and implementation oversight.

Ms. Zegeye concluded by stating that the TAC had reviewed the FY25 UPWP, and recommended its adoption at their April meeting, and the staff also recommends that the Council adopt the FY25 UPWP as presented.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Stephen O'Connor and seconded by Mr. Tim Lucas the Council adopts the Fiscal Year 2025 Unified Planning Work Program.

Motion passed.

(05-23-24-04)

12. To amend the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

Ms. Heather Dunigan presented the First Amendment from the City of Wilmington. This project was known during the development of the RTP, but at that time, it was understood that it would not be federally funded and therefore was not included in the RTP. However, the project has since received a RAISE grant, making it a \$95.7 million project.

This amendment was reviewed at the last TAC and Air Quality Subcommittee meeting. Both committees determined that the project would not trigger a new air quality conformity analysis. The project includes new local connector roadways. Both the Air Quality Subcommittee and the TAC recommended the adoption of this amendment.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Stephen O'Connor and seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council approved the TIP amendment.

Motion passed. (05-23-24-05)

13. To amend the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Heather Dunigan presented an amendment from DelDOT recommending an increase in funding for the Beech Street Maintenance Facility for DTC at the Beech Street location. This amendment proposes additional construction funds, raising the total project cost to \$11.6 million. The TAC has reviewed and recommended approval of this amendment.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Charuni Patibanda and seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council approved the TIP amendment.

Motion passed. (05-23-24-06)

14. To amend the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Heather Dunigan presented an amendment from DelDOT concerning funding for the project on US 40 from Salem Church Rd. to Walther Rd. This project involves adding additional lanes and improving pedestrian and bicycle facilities. As part of this amendment, the funding will be reduced from approximately \$23.8 million to \$13.6 million within the one-year program.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Stephen O'Connor and seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council approved the TIP amendment.

Motion passed. (05-23-24-07)

15. To Certify the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process for FY2025

Ms. Heather Dunigan explained that although this topic is part of the TIP document, it is being presented as a separate action item. As part of WILMAPCO's responsibilities as a TMA, we undergo an in-person certification with the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration every four years. In the interim years, WILMAPCO adopts a self-certification resolution, which states how WILMAPCO complies with MPO requirements.

The resolution outlines all the requirements for WILMAPCO as an MPO and TMA, and it is signed by the Council Chair, John Sisson, as well as the Secretaries of MDOT and DelDOT. The TIP document includes a self-certification appendix that details where each of the elements referred to in the self-certification resolution can be found. This allows for a clear understanding of not only what an MPO is required to do but also how WILMAPCO is meeting those requirements, as demonstrated in their technical reports.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Tim Lucas and seconded by Mr. Eric Scott Thompson the Council approved the Fiscal Year 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process Certification.

Motion passed. (05-23-24-08)

16. To adopt the FY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Heather Dunigan presented the FY2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for adoption, which was open for public review from March 18th to May 13th. During this period, two public workshops were held: the first on April 16th at WILMAPCO in Newark, and the second at Middletown Town Hall on May 1st.

Ms. Dunigan shared that at these workshops, attendees sought information about the projects and engaged with DeIDOT staff managing the projects. At the May 1st workshop, attendees expressed concerns about warehouse development south of the canal, implementation of the Transportation Improvement District (TID), and curiosity about the planning process and its impacts on development and transportation.

During Public Comment period two comments were received: one questioned the absence of a virtual meeting for the TIP, with Ms. Dunigan explaining that all relevant information is available on the website and encouraged individuals to email questions or comments for personalized responses. The other comment, submitted by DE Greenways, expressed commendation for the TIP and full support.

Mr. Stephen O'Connor raised a question regarding the Mechanics Valley Road bridge over CSX and the school zone crosswalks at Elk Neck Elementary, noting their absence from the current TIP.

Ms. Heather Dunigan responded, explaining that funding for these projects was last shown in FY 2024, which is why they are not included in the FY2025-2028 TIP. She encouraged Cecil County to submit a TIP amendment if the funding has changed. Mr. O'Connor acknowledged this and mentioned that his team would have to work on making some amendments then.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Pamela Steinebach and seconded by Mr. Dan Janousek with one opposition by Mr. Stephen O'Connor, the Council adopts the FY2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program.

Motion passed.

(05-23-24-09)

17. To Endorse the 2024 Inter-Regional Report

Mr. Jake Thompson presented the latest draft of the 2024 Interregional Report, which is linked on the meeting agenda. This report provides a data-oriented summary of demographic changes and travel characteristics across a 28-county study area centered on the WILMAPCO region. It has been periodically updated since 2004, with the last update in 2018. The 2024 update incorporates recent data from sources such as the US Census Bureau, the Federal Highway Administration, MPOs, county planning departments, and transit providers, featuring detailed maps and analyses.

The report includes current and future projections on various measures including population and employment changes, traffic volumes, volume-to-capacity ratios, commute patterns, freight movement, interregional transit routes, portable transit score, low-income and minority populations, transportation investment areas, and interregional projects. It also analyzes key corridors in the study area and provides updates on interregional planning activities.

Key findings from the report indicate significant population and employment growth projected by 2050, alongside substantial increases in traffic if no changes are made to the transportation system. Recommendations in the report emphasize improving transit accessibility, frequency, and efficiency. It suggests expanding intercounty transit services, fostering interagency coordination, supporting walkable land uses, and managing growth.

The draft 2024 Interregional Report was recommended for endorsement by the Technical Advisory Committee during their March meeting. It has also been reviewed by the Public Advisory Committee and the Non-Motorized Transportation Working Group, with the latest draft incorporating their feedback and edits.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Eric Scott Thompson and seconded by Mr. Tim Lucas, the Council endorsed the 2024 Inter-Regional Report.

Motion passed.

(05-23-24-10)

18. To Approve the Proposed New Public Advisory Committee (PAC) members

Mr. Dave Gula provided a formal update on the establishment of a public advisory committee mandated by the Council for WILMAPCO. He noted that the committee can have up to 35 members and aims for a regional representation that considers diversity. The committee meets six times a year and assists in public outreach efforts, but currently has a couple of vacancies.

Mr. Gula highlighted the need for representation from the Wilmington area on the PAC, which currently comprises 16 members. After conducting research and collaborating with past partners, WILMAPCO has identified two potential new members for the PAC. One nominee is Robert Bullock, President of the Holloway Terrace Association, who has been actively involved in the Route 9 study and subsequent monitoring committee. The second nominee is Sarah Lester, President and CEO of Westside Grows Together and Cornerstone West, with whom WILMAPCO has collaborated on various projects in the city of Wilmington. These nominations aim to fill vacancies and ensure representation from both the south and central areas of Wilmington, adding that Ms. Lester has participated in a broad scope of projects from the West Side to the I-95 CAP study.

Mr. Gula clarified that neither the PAC nor the TAC took action on these nominations, however, Staff recommended that the Council approve these two new members for three-year terms.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Charuni Patibanda and seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinebach the Council approved the nominated PAC members.

Motion passed.

(05-23-24-11)

PRESENTATIONS:

19. Claymont Area Master Plan

Ms. Heather Dunigan provided an update on the recent public workshop for the Claymont Area Master Plan (CAMP). She highlighted that the workshop included a monitoring update for the North Claymont Area Master Plan and the Governor Printz Corridor study due to the overlapping study areas and shared stakeholders. Ms. Dunigan stated that central Claymont area is the primary focus of planning efforts this year.

Ms. Dunigan explained the CAMP process which is currently more than halfway through. It began with identifying existing conditions and holding a community visioning workshop in

February. Draft scenarios and a monitoring update were presented at a May 20th meeting. Feedback collected over the summer will be analyzed, and the refined scenarios will be brought back to the community in the fall. The planning efforts involve collaboration with New Castle County Land Use, DeIDOT, and local partners such as the Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation. The advisory and monitoring committee includes area elected officials, civic associations, businesses, and community partners.

The monitoring report includes an updated addendum and interactive mapping showing progress in redeveloping areas such as the Claymont Steel site, Tri-State Mall, and the Port area. The addition of Governor Printz Boulevard to the TIP and other changes were also noted.

The Claymont Area Master Plan focuses on the Hometown Overlay, a special zoning established by New Castle County to give greater local control to town-like unincorporated areas. The study area includes the entire Hometown Overlay Zone and an expanded area extending to I-95, I-495, and down to the river. The plan envisions character areas within the study area, including the high-density Claymont Center and surrounding transitional and edge zones. Ms. Dunigan added that the goal is to create walkable, mixed-use nodes and maintain vital community spaces.

The community visioning session in February gathered feedback on preferences and concerns. Residents appreciated the small community feel, affordable housing, and historic institutions of Claymont. Concerns included the development of data centers and warehousing, traffic from new developments, and the lack of open spaces. Residents expressed a desire for more parks and revitalization of vacant spaces.

On the transportation side, residents valued good highway and train access, a connected street pattern, and pedestrian safety. Concerns included speeding, left-turn difficulties, and the need for better pedestrian crossings and connections to the new train station. Based on this feedback, goals for the study include focusing on walkable centers and activity nodes, improving multimodal connections, and building partnerships. The 2014 plan, which led to the Hometown Overlay, identified opportunity parcels for redevelopment, some of which have been developed successfully.

The existing conditions analysis found that the area can support additional townhomes and apartments, with suggested commercial uses as part of mixed-use redevelopment efforts. Potential redevelopment sites include the Claymont Shopping Center, Governor Printz Boulevard and Philadelphia Pike intersection, and Town & Country Plaza.

Transportation strategies address community concerns about speeding and pedestrian safety by extending the road diet, adding roundabouts, and improving pedestrian crossings and lighting. Three land use scenarios have been developed. Scenario One involves minor changes and modernizes the 2004 plan. Scenario Two proposes greater density along Philadelphia Pike with new nodes. Scenario Three allows even greater density with four-story buildings at gateway districts and enhanced pedestrian connections. The scenarios will be compared over the summer, and feedback from the second workshop will be incorporated. Draft performance measures include walking distance to parks, active uses along Philadelphia Pike, environmental justice impacts, and affordable housing. Transportation measures focus on reducing crashes, improving pedestrian safety, and facilitating multimodal travel. Information about public workshops and an interactive survey are available online for those unable to attend in person. Ms. Dunigan concluded by inviting questions from the attendees.

Mr. John Sisson raised a question about transit improvements along the corridor, specifically whether there were plans for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), signal prioritization, or bump-outs, like initiatives on Kirkwood Highway. He inquired about measures to help buses move faster through the corridor.

Ms. Heather Dunigan responded affirmatively, stating that they were considering bump-outs and bus islands to prevent buses from constantly pulling over and re-entering lanes, which slows them down. She mentioned discussions about signal prioritization for the fire company and suggested that bus preemption could be included in those plans. She also expressed willingness to collaborate with Sisson's team to explore other ideas, particularly for the North Claymont area and around the train stations. Dunigan noted the challenges faced by people with mobility issues in accessing buses from Governor Printz to Philadelphia Pike due to difficult walking conditions.

Mr. John Sisson added that there are alternative routes to the train station, such as Myrtle Avenue and pedestrian pathways, which could alleviate some of the challenges of crossing Philadelphia Pike and I-495. Ms. Dunigan acknowledged this point and mentioned that better signage could help alleviate public confusion. She noted that temporary closures due to the decommissioning of the station have caused misunderstanding among the public, who are unaware that the trail closures are temporary.

Mr. Sisson confirmed that the pathway has since been reopened following discussions with Amtrak. He agreed to work with Pam's team to improve signage and reduce confusion about accessing the train station by various means. Ms. Heather Dunigan agreed, emphasizing the need for clear signage to inform the public about temporary closures and alternative routes.

20. DART Reimagined Briefing

Mr. John Sisson began this presentation by stating it was an overview of the DART Reimagined briefing presented to the state legislators, highlighting its statewide scope beyond New Castle County. He praised Ms. Cathy Smith for her leadership in reshaping public transit in response to changing travel patterns and new technologies throughout her work in DART Reimagined. The initiative aims to increase public transit accessibility, with recommendations projected to extend access from about one-third to over half of Delawareans within a quarter-mile radius. Enhancements include improved weekend service and more direct routes, especially benefiting low-income populations.

Mr. Sisson emphasized the importance of equitable access, job and service connectivity, improved service quality, customer satisfaction, and optimized resource investment. He discussed a variety of transit services, including core routes with high ridership, local services in suburban areas, rural community services, and inter-county connections. A notable addition is microtransit, similar to an Uber or Lyft model for public transit, offering on-demand, flexible transportation options. Mr. Sisson shared that the team is arduously working on purchasing and implementing a better software service for the DART Connect app to make the service more accessible and effectively communicated to commuters.

The outreach for DART Reimagined was extensive, involving an Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committees for each county and the City of Wilmington, employee consultations, and numerous public engagements through various workshops and online platforms. Feedback indicated a strong demand for more weekend and evening services, with a focus on equity and pedestrian infrastructure improvements. Survey responses revealed that riders prioritize cost

and reliability, with a significant number seeking varied destinations for grocery shopping, healthcare, and more.

Key policy recommendations include embracing the DART Reimagined network, maintaining partnerships, enhancing communication, integrating land use and transportation strategies, ensuring safety and accessibility, and improving system efficiency. Phase one of the implementation has begun, with changes such as discontinuing underperforming routes and introducing new services. Future phases will further expand microtransit zones and enhance connectivity across the state including Kent and Sussex counties.

Mr. Sisson concluded by inviting further discussion and availability for other presentation forums. Mr. Sisson mentioned the final report available on the DART Reimagined website www.DARTreimagined.com.

Ms. Pamela Steinebach and Ms. Charuni Patibanda expressed their support, noting that with each presentation, they learned more about the extensive work completed on this project. They thanked Mr. Sisson for the enlightening information and shared their excitement for future changes.

Mr. Dave Gula expressed strong support for the process, noting that the public frequently approaches WILMAPCO and partners with questions about service changes. He emphasized that this process provides a clear strategy, helping to explain why buses are routed in certain ways and not others. It highlights the importance of strengthening core services and focusing on areas that require the greatest access and safety improvements. Mr. Gula praised the partnership with DART, noting that their presence at Advisory Committee meetings and workshops has been invaluable. He appreciated the clear communication about future changes, which has significantly aided their planning strategies. Mr. Gula thanked DART for their commitment and the fruitful partnership, emphasizing the positive impact on transit planning.

Mr. Sisson responded with appreciation, acknowledging the challenges of communicating changes to the public. He shared a story about a rider who was unaware of changes despite multiple signs around them and the buses, emphasizing the difficulty of outreach. Mr. Sisson expressed optimism about the steady growth of DART Connect Newark, noting that data is being studied to adjust operations as needed. He highlighted the flexibility of the system, allowing for adjustments based on demand, rather than running underutilized buses. Mr. Sisson reiterated his willingness to discuss the process further with any interested parties and mentioned upcoming briefings with legislators to address any concerns about service changes, always aiming for the greater good.

21. East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan

Mr. Bill Swiatek presented an update on the East Elkton Plan, highlighting its successful progress. He provided an overview for those unfamiliar with the study, which was requested by both Cecil County and the Town of Elkton. The study combines two separate UPWP requests into one, focusing on three main corridors in Elkton: Belle Hill Road in the north, Muddy Lane in the central area, and Delancy Road in the south.

The project is guided by a robust Steering Committee composed of local officials from both the town and county, with significant contributions from schools, MDOT and SHA, Elkton Alliance, East Coast Greenway, state police, fire departments, Amtrak, and the Elkton Chamber of Commerce.

As the study nears completion, Mr. Swiatek detailed the progress made over the past year, including the completion of the existing conditions report and the visioning phase. They are currently finalizing their second public survey to identify preferred alternatives and will soon move into the final phase of selecting recommendations.

Engagement efforts have included two public surveys and a parallel youth engagement initiative as part of the planning process. Public workshops with full presentations and corresponding surveys have been conducted, along with targeted outreach within transportation justice areas. The response has been positive, with increasing public involvement noted in the surveys and workshops.

The study aims to improve circulation and safety within the corridor, particularly as new developments arise. Survey results indicate significant public concern about traffic safety on Delancy Road, Muddy Lane, and Belle Hill Road. Feedback from youth surveys highlights a desire for more walking and biking opportunities.

One key issue identified is the low tunnel under Muddy Lane and the Amtrak rail line, which poses safety and connectivity challenges. Two alternatives were proposed: a realignment of Muddy Lane with a better underpass or a bridge over the railroad tracks. The underpass option is currently preferred by the public based on surveying.

For Belle Hill Road, the study addresses conflicts between truck and residential traffic, proposing a better alignment at the intersection with Maryland 279 and treatments to slow traffic in residential areas.

Mr. Swiatek concluded by mentioning the next steps: finalizing the second survey wrapping up on June 7th, holding a public workshop on June 27th at the Elkton Public Library, and aiming to present draft recommendations in July and seek Council approval in September. Additional details are available on the study's website at www.wilmapco.org/east-elkton.

Mr. Stephen O'Connor expressed his support, thanking Bill, WILMAPCO, and the team at Wallace Montgomery for their hard work and commendable efforts, noting that things have gone very well so far.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

22. DeIDOT's Administrative Modification Request Letters

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 11:43 a.m.

ATTACHMENTS: (0)