

Quarterly newsletter of the Wilmington Area Planning Council

# TRANSPORTER

WILMAPCO

## WILMAPCO Is Updating Its Public Participation Plan

The importance of public participation in transportation planning can't be overstated. Planners need to understand the diverse perspectives of elected officials, advocates, and stakeholders as they devise plans and programs; and they need to pay particular attention to those who have been historically undeserved by transportation investments, including low-income and minority populations.

A primary goal of Metropolitan Planning Organizations like WILMAPCO is to ensure that the public has a direct voice in the decision-making process. To aid in that process, WILMAPCO is updating its Public Participation Plan (PPP), which provides an

overview of how we ensure that the public is involved.

To ensure that the goals and objectives of the PPP directly reflect those of the public affected by the plan, WILMAPCO has done the following:

- Conducted best-practices research
- Participated in a Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration PPP Development Peer Exchange
- Conducted a web-based public participation survey
- Encouraged member agency participation in the public outreach survey

- Included public outreach questions in its (statistically valid) telephone public-opinion survey
- Consulted with member agencies through presentations to its various committees
- Conducted a public workshop on September 16, 2019

We will also be conducting a 45-day public comment period early next year.

Comments and survey data from the PPP development process will be used throughout the updated plan.

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To learn more or sign up for updates, please visit [www.wilmapco.org/ppp](http://www.wilmapco.org/ppp).



# Transportation Justice Plan Spotlight: Redrawing the Region's Food Deserts

A “food desert” is an impoverished community located too far from healthy and affordable food. WILMAPCO’s 2019 Transportation Justice (TJ) Plan redefined area food deserts, improving upon the official methodology used by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The USDA has a few ways to identify food deserts. One common approach is to flag low-income census tracts where more than a third of residents are at least one mile from the nearest supermarket. Census tracts, however, are often quite large. They also can house several distinctive neighborhoods and open spaces, industrial parks, and other places where people do not live. These non-residential areas are not removed with the USDA identification process. Finally, the USDA methodology does not consider public transit. It assumes people will only walk, bike, or drive to the supermarket.

WILMAPCO took the USDA approach and fine-tuned it to redefine food deserts. We identified low-income census block groups (smaller than tracts) where more than a third of residents were one mile or more from the nearest supermarket. Next, we trimmed away unpopulated areas of those block groups. Finally, we classed the resulting food deserts by their level of bus connectivity to supermarkets.

As part of the TJ Plan, we also conducted connectivity analyses that measured how easily residents could get from their front door by walking, biking, taking a bus, and driving to various destinations — including supermarkets. (Look for

more information on this aspect of the plan in a future spotlight.) We then mapped what percentage of housing units within each of the census block groups was accessible to various destinations on various modes. We considered an easily accessible bus trip to be 30 minutes, door to door, with no more than 10 minutes of walking.

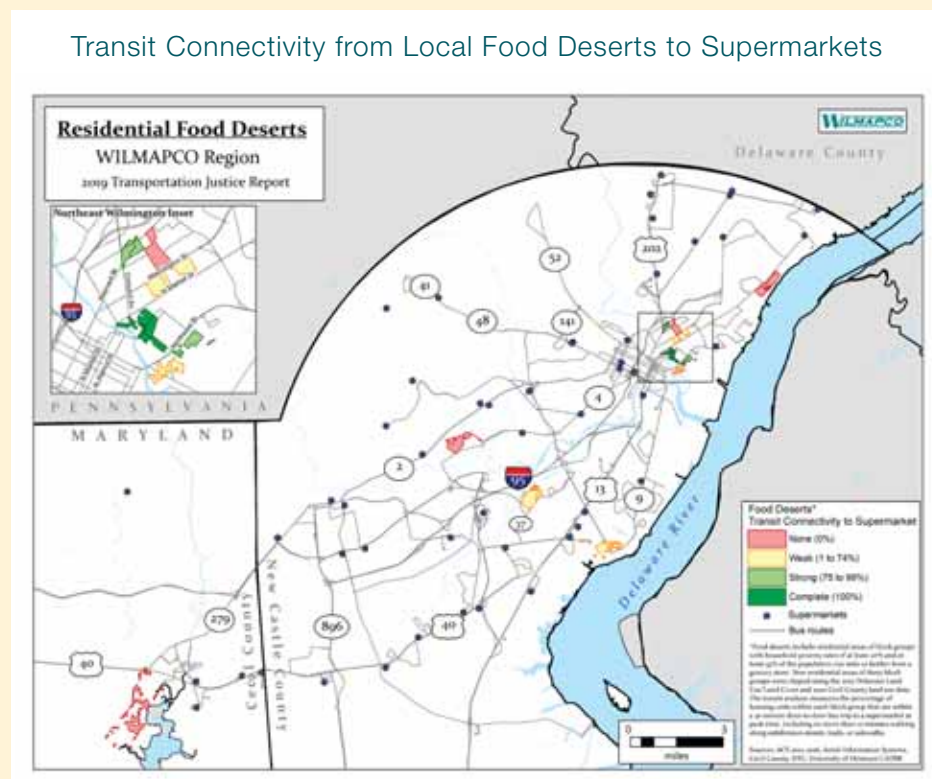
The map below shows the results of our food desert analysis. These WILMAPCO-defined food deserts can be found along the I-95 corridor in the north of the region, roughly stretching from Elkton to Claymont. Four food deserts were found to have poor transit connectivity to supermarkets. These are: communities in and around the Riverview Place Apartments in Holly Oak, north of Wilmington; portions of the Eastlake community in Wilmington's Northeast; the Murray Manor Trailer

Park west of Stanton; and fragmented residential parcels southwest of the Town of Elkton. Other food deserts were found to have weak, strong, or complete transit connectivity to supermarkets.

Compared to the USDA methodology, which classifies large swathes of the region as food deserts, the WILMAPCO approach is more targeted. It opens the door to focused interventions to improve healthy and affordable food access.

The 2019 TJ Plan identifies key social inequities in the Wilmington region's transportation system. We examine the fairness and inclusivity of the existing and planned system, as well as our public engagement processes.

To learn more, please visit  
[www.wilmapco.org/tj](http://www.wilmapco.org/tj).







## WILMAPCO to Study Effects of Development in Newport

Another new WILMAPCO study is beginning this year in Newport. The Newport Transportation Study will examine the impacts of new development in Newport and its surrounding areas. It will also consider the benefits that an updated, multi-modal transportation network will have on Newport's goal of being a more walkable and transit-friendly town. The study area includes the Town of Newport and the surrounding areas of unincorporated New Castle County.

The idea for the project began in 2011, when Newport reached out to WILMAPCO to discuss re-opening the Newport Train Station. The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC), and WILMAPCO worked with the town to determine the feasibility of this project and the associated costs. The Newport Train Station Feasibility Study was completed in July 2013, but development of the Newport Train Station has not yet commenced and the town has continued to work with DelDOT, DTC, and state legislators to advance this project.

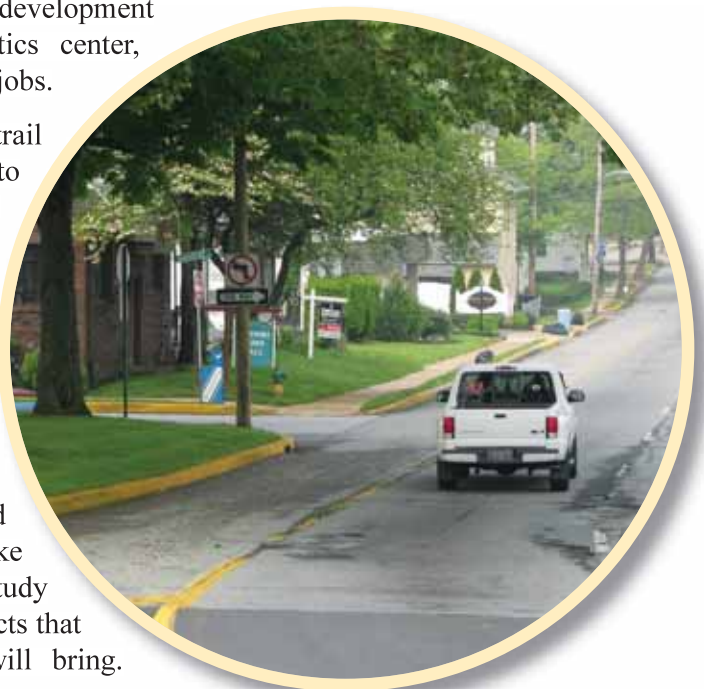
Recent development projects continue to move the town toward its goal of becoming a more thriving and walkable place. These include:

- A 400,000-square-foot mixed-use development that includes residential, retail, and dining has recently been proposed for the downtown area.
- The former General Motors Boxwood Assembly Plant, located just over a mile from the downtown area, is planned for redevelopment as a regional logistics center, providing 2,200 new jobs.
- A new riverfront trail is being planned to connect the town to the Jack Markell Trail along the Christina River.

With these plans underway, the Town of Newport has requested that DelDOT, DTC, and WILMAPCO undertake a new transportation study to prepare for the impacts that these developments will bring.

Several interactive public workshops and meetings will be held throughout the study process to ensure adequate public feedback is received and incorporated as the study moves forward.

To learn about updates and opportunities to participate in this and other WILMAPCO studies, sign up to receive WILMAPCO's E-News at [www.wilmapco.org](http://www.wilmapco.org).



# Work on Route 9 Corridor Master Plan

## Showing Signs of Success



The Route 9 Corridor Master Plan, adopted in 2017, established a vision for the redevelopment of communities along Route 9 between Wilmington and New Castle. The Master Plan featured strong and innovative public engagement that was the foundation for its land-use and transportation recommendations.

That engagement has continued through the work of a Monitoring Committee. A hybrid community and government coalition, the Route 9 Monitoring Committee aims to guide plan implementation. Chaired by WILMAPCO, its membership draws from the area's civic leaders, nonprofits, and state and county agencies. Since its formation, the Monitoring Committee has achieved several successes, including:

- **Transportation Project Prioritization Process:** A quantitative, locally based process was developed to prioritize the transportation projects from the Master Plan. The projects include intersection rebuilds, streetscape upgrades, and new pathways. The project prioritization process is the most robust and transparent of

its kind in Delaware, pioneering ways to incorporate public health measures and crime statistics. Today, it is being actively used by DelDOT to guide implementation of major work set to begin in the mid-2020s.

- **Local Hire Project:** The Monitoring Committee has spearheaded an effort to have local labor help construct the transportation projects described above. The effort, funded by New Castle County, will reform the way DelDOT contracts are written to, in effect, “change the way the game is played.” The idea is that winning contractors will be required to train and hire from a local labor pool. The overall aim is to help reduce unemployment and underemployment, which are key problems in the corridor.
- **Safe Routes to School Programs:** The Monitoring Committee supported the development of a pair of programs to help kids more safely reach area schools by walking and biking. Fresh sidewalks, crosswalks, and road signage are funded and are set for construction next year around McCullough Middle School and Eisenberg Elementary School.
- **Memorial Drive Safety Project:** The Master Plan found that Memorial Drive, a key road that connects U.S. 13 and Route 9, is overbuilt. That encourages unsafe driving speeds and makes it tough to cross on foot. A “road diet” was proposed that would eliminate one of the two car traffic lanes in each direction in favor of bike lanes, extra parking space, and a center turn lane. Models show that

car traffic will continue to flow properly with the change, even with greater-than-expected population and job growth. Speeds, however, should drop and people walking (especially schoolkids) will have an easier time crossing the road. WILMAPCO estimates that there will be 40 fewer car crashes during the next 10 years with the change. Through consultations with the Monitoring Committee, DelDOT developed what is a quickly implementable interim version of the road diet called for in the Master Plan that does not include the center turn lane. After much dialogue, bordering civic-association leaders threw their support behind it. The project is now set for immediate implementation this summer.

- **Hamilton and Eden Park Relocation Survey:** The Monitoring Committee helped shape the development of a community survey in the Hamilton and Eden Park neighborhoods. Funded by New Castle County and executed by the University of Delaware and residents, the survey measured attitudes to the neighborhood relocations called for in the Master Plan. Both neighborhoods are hemmed in by industrial areas due to poor past zoning decisions. Residents there are subsequently burdened by numerous health and quality-of-life concerns. Nine in 10 homeowners who took the survey were open to relocation, long advocated for by the local civic association, and about seven in 10 residents overall. A next step involves analyzing the results of a separate property-owner survey.



- **Public Health Disparities:** The Monitoring Committee has initiated conversations with state health and environmental officials to better understand the corridor's cancer statistics and health disparities. Disagreement exists between the community and the state regarding the impacts of local pollution on cancer causation. Meanwhile, little other localized health data are readily available. A subcommittee is working to bridge the divide, gather data, and develop projects that would have positive health impacts. One project involves working to reduce the area's high coarse-dust pollution through additional street sweeping and drain clearing.

The group has also continued public engagement on the plan, while tracking the pulse of public opinion. Following a major public workshop last summer, the Monitoring Committee is today working to develop videos about the Master Plan and its elements to reach an even broader audience. Since 2018, the group has exhibited at five local public events to discuss the plan and gather feedback. Informal surveying of dozens of residents at these events indicates that nine in 10 support the Master Plan's goals.

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For more information about the Route 9 Master Plan and its Monitoring Committee, please visit [www.wilmapco.org/route9](http://www.wilmapco.org/route9).

## Study to Explore Improvements for Governor Printz Boulevard

A new WILMAPCO study of Governor Printz Boulevard has begun. The study will identify walking, biking, transit, and roadway safety improvements, including a potential "road diet" and a trail connecting Claymont to Fox Point State Park.

The study area extends 6.1 miles from Philadelphia Pike — including the Claymont Regional Transportation Center — to Northeast Boulevard at the City of Wilmington line.

Governor Printz is a four-lane roadway that parallels I-495. Southern portions of the corridor are served by DART routes 4 and 14. The corridor is also part of the planned East Coast Greenway route between the Claymont Train Station and the Northern Delaware Greenway. Most of the corridor has shoulders or marked bicycle lanes, but very few sections have

sidewalks or crosswalks.

The purpose of the study is to improve mobility, safety, and travel choices while supporting sustainable economic development and enhancing neighborhood vitality. The study will identify and assess the feasibility of transportation projects that will accommodate current and future needs. It is being conducted in partnership with New Castle County Land Use, DelDOT, Delaware Transit Corporation, Delaware Greenways, and other key stakeholders, and will include a facilitated stakeholder outreach process, with several meetings and interactive workshops planned.

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For updates, stay tuned to this newsletter or sign up for WILMAPCO's E-News at [www.wilmapco.org](http://www.wilmapco.org).



# A New Plan for the East 7th Street Peninsula



The Wilmington Initiatives Partners (City of Wilmington, DelDOT, DTC, and WILMAPCO) recently completed the East 7th Street Peninsula Roadway and Infrastructure Improvement Study. The result is a plan to improve the public infrastructure on the peninsula, protect the businesses there, and promote more diverse and recreational uses in this underutilized part of the city.

The study identifies and prioritizes the implementation of necessary roadway and utility improvements, using community input to evaluate and recommend land uses. The public also assisted in prioritizing the phasing of the different elements of the plan:

- **Phase 1:** Upgrade the stormwater management system for the peninsula, including maintenance of pipes and tide gates, and creation of a stormwater retention pond. Cost: \$2.1 million.
- **Phase 2:** Repave East 7th Street from Church Street to the eastern

end at Babiarz Park; this includes Wilmington Industrial Park street access. Low-lying portions of these streets will be raised 3-5 feet to improve drainage systems. A roundabout will be added at Wilmington Industrial Park Drive; sidewalk, streetscape, and lighting improvements will be added both to the east and west of the Amtrak viaduct. Cost: \$6.4 million.

- **Phase 3:** Repave Swedes Landing Road and create a signalized intersection at 4th Street. Sidewalk, streetscape, and lighting improvements will be included. Cost: \$3 million.
- **Phase 4:** Repave East 8th Street from east of Claymont Street to its eastern end; this also includes Claymont Street. Low-lying portions of these streets will be raised 3-5 feet to improve drainage systems. A connection at the eastern end to Wilmington Industrial Park will be sought to create access during the construction of 7th Street. Sidewalk, streetscape, and lighting

improvements will be included. Cost: \$4 million (parts of this phase may be necessary to combine with Phase 2).

- **Phase 5:** Repave North Church Street between East 4th and East 8th Streets; repave East 8th Street between Church Street and the Amtrak viaduct. Re-open the 8th Street tunnel under the Amtrak viaduct. Sidewalk, streetscape, and lighting improvements will be added. Cost: \$1 million per block.
- **Phase 6:** A Riverwalk trail will be added around the perimeter of the peninsula (approximately 2 miles), connecting the 8th Street viaduct access at the north end to Christina Park at 4th Street at the south end. Lighting, benches, and information kiosks will be included. Cost: \$2 million.

To learn more and review the report, please visit

[www.wilmapco.org/7thstreetpeninsula](http://www.wilmapco.org/7thstreetpeninsula).





# WILMAPCO Wraps Up Study on the 12th Street Connector

The 12th Street Connector Study is now complete and the final report has been endorsed by WILMAPCO's Council.

For this study, the project team formed a collaborative effort with the community and the City of Wilmington. The study's goal is to evaluate and recommend the optimal location and design for the proposed 12th Street Connector, a roadway that will provide a more direct route from I-495 to downtown, redirect current traffic from city neighborhoods, and create multi-modal connections for residents to access the Brandywine Riverfront.

At the same time, the Wilmington Department of Planning and Development worked to develop a plan in the same area for sustainable reuse of brownfield sites and the surrounding neighborhood. The

Brownfield Study looked to create an economic development strategy for the neighborhood, while the 12th Street Connector Study worked to identify the transportation infrastructure necessary to realize this vision.

After a year of working collaboratively with the community and the Brownfield Study, the 12th Street Connector project team has completed a final report that includes a preferred alignment for the new connecting roadway. The preferred concept shows a new roadway connection on the west side of the re-aligned and improved intersection of 12th Street and Northeast Boulevard. This roadway includes driveway access to current businesses at what is currently a stub of North Locust Street, and a proposed roundabout at the intersection with North Church and 14th Streets. The new roadway continues west at this

intersection along the former 14th Street alignment to the intersection with Pine Street, Jessup Street, and the East 16th Street Bridge.

Improvements are also planned for traffic calming on Thatcher Street at 16th Street and Vandever Avenue; 14th Street between Church and Thatcher Streets; North Locust Street; and North Church Street. This new roadway will include a multi-use path along the south (river) side, sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian lighting, and on-street parking. The preferred alignment will benefit the community by adding well-lit, safe connections to the new multi-modal connection along the Brandywine River.

To learn more, please visit the project webpage at [www.wilmapco.org/12thstreetconnector](http://www.wilmapco.org/12thstreetconnector).



## WILMINGTON AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

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## WILMAPCO PUBLIC MEETINGS

Unless specified, meetings will be held at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, Delaware. Your participation at these meetings is appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact us at (302) 737-6205 or toll free from Cecil County at (888) 808-7088. **During inclement weather, please call to verify meetings.**

NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY
<b>November 14, 10 a.m.</b> Air Quality Subcommittee	<b>December 3, 3 p.m.</b> Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group	<b>January 9, 10 a.m.</b> Air Quality Subcommittee
<b>November 14, 4 p.m.</b> WILMAPCO Council	<b>December 16, 6 p.m.</b> Public Advisory Committee	<b>January 9, 4 p.m.</b> WILMAPCO Council
<b>November 21, 10 a.m.</b> Technical Advisory Committee	<b>December 19, 10 a.m.</b> Joint Technical Advisory Committee and Air Quality Subcommittee	<b>January 16, 10 a.m.</b> Technical Advisory Committee

**HAVE YOU RECENTLY MOVED? DO YOU NO LONGER WISH TO RECEIVE TRANSPORTER?  
WOULD A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER LIKE TO BE ADDED TO THE MAILING LIST?**

IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT **JANET BUTLER** AT **302-737-6205 EXT. 110**  
OR **JBUTLER@WILMAPCO.ORG** WITH YOUR MAILING LIST UPDATES.