

WILMINGTON AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

Draft Public Participation Plan

JUNE 2020.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Public Advisory Committee (PAC) guided the development of the Public Participation Plan. The PAC is an advisory committee to the WILMAPCO Council on public participation strategies and it provides a forum for community concerns. It is made up of representatives for New Castle and Cecil Counties, civic organizations, business people, community leaders, environmental activists, and interested residents.

Organizations represented on the public advisory committee include:

- ◆ AAA Delaware
- ◆ AARP Delaware
- ◆ Bear Glasgow Council
- ◆ Centerville Civic Association
- ◆ Cecil County
- ◆ Cecil County Board of Realtors
- ◆ Cecil County Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ City of New Castle
- ◆ City of Newark
- ◆ Committee of 100
- ◆ Delaware Hispanic Commission
- ◆ Delmarva Rail Passenger Association
- ◆ Delaware State Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ Greater Hockessin Area Development Association
- ◆ Milltown-Limestone Civic Alliance
- ◆ New Castle County
- ◆ New Castle County Civic League
- ◆ Pike Creek Civic League
- ◆ Southern New Castle County Alliance
- ◆ The Committee of 100
- ◆ 7/40 Alliance

"An effective public involvement process provides for an open exchange of information and ideas between the public and transportation decision makers."

- Federal Highway Administration guidelines (FHWA Docket No. 94-27)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

What is an MPO?

Who is WILMAPCO?

WILMAPCO's Major Planning Committees

Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

Public Participation Plan Development Process

Public Participation Plan Requirements

SECTION II: TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

SECTION III: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

SECTION IV: TRANSPORTATION, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, LEP

SECTION V: EVALUATION OF THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (TO BE UPDATED)

APPENDIX

Glossary of Terms

Public Participation Web Survey Results

What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?

The transportation system not only provides a means of moving people and goods from place to place, but it also helps to shape economic health and quality of life. How well the transportation system meets regional goals affects public policy concerns such as air quality, social equity, land use, urban growth, economic development, safety, and security. Transportation planning requires developing strategies for operating, managing, maintaining, and financing the transportation system while furthering long-range goals.

A Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MPO, is a transportation decision-making body comprised of representatives from local governments and transportation agencies. The purpose of an MPO is to ensure that transportation expenditures are based on a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) planning process. MPOs plan all federally-funded transportation investments while providing a forum for local officials, public transportation providers, state agency representatives, and the general public to cooperatively work together to meet the region's transportation needs.



Who is WILMAPCO?

The Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) is the regional transportation planning agency for the Cecil County and New Castle County area, known as the Wilmington Metropolitan Region. WILMAPCO is the MPO federally designated to develop and implement a coordinated, comprehensive, and continuing planning process that addresses issues related to the transportation systems of New Castle and Cecil counties. As the federally designated MPO, WILMAPCO is charged with planning and coordinating the many transportation investments proposed for this region. WILMAPCO

is governed by a Council made up of elected officials from the jurisdictions within our region. Our nine-member Council consists of:

- ◆ Delaware and Maryland departments of transportation
- ◆ Delaware Transit Corporation
- ◆ New Castle and Cecil counties
- ◆ Appointee of the Delaware Governor
- ◆ City of Wilmington
- ◆ Municipal representatives from New Castle and Cecil counties

The WILMAPCO Council provides the region a valuable forum in which to consider the issues, develop coordinated strategies, and recommend prudent investments in our system to solve the transportation challenges we face in the region.

WILMAPCO'S MAJOR PLANNING COMMITTEES

WILMAPCO functions under a committee structure comprised of a Council, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), a Public Advisory Committee (PAC), and WILMAPCO staff. The WILMAPCO staff works under the leadership of the Executive Director to provide professional transportation planning services and ongoing administration of projects.

WILMAPCO Council

The WILMAPCO Council is composed of representatives of state and local governments and public agencies responsible for transportation and land use policies and services. It consists of six Delaware members and three Maryland members and meets at 10 a.m. on the first Thursday of every other month. Council adopts transportation plans and studies, to set policy, and approves funding for transportation projects throughout our region.

Technical Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is an advisory committee to the Council that represents federal, state, and local planning agencies in Delaware and Maryland. The TAC is responsible for overseeing the technical work of WILMAPCO staff and developing recommendations to Council on projects and programs. TAC members include representatives from transportation agencies, environmental agencies, federal agencies, state, county, and municipal representatives. The TAC meets on the third Thursday of every month at 10 a.m.

Public Advisory Committee

The Public Advisory Committee (PAC) is an advisory committee to the Council, representing a diverse group of organizations and residents including: representatives from New Castle and Cecil Counties, business people, community leaders, environmental activists, and interested residents. Their mission is to advise the Council on public participation strategies and to provide a forum for community concerns. The PAC meets the Monday prior to the TAC (generally, 3rd Monday) every other month at 6 p.m. PAC assists the Council with public outreach through the following tasks:

- ◆ Recommending public outreach and involvement strategies
- ◆ Reviewing and critiquing WILMAPCO publications for clarity, effectiveness, and user friendliness
- ◆ Serving as a liaison between Council and the public for the distribution of WILMAPCO publications and information
- ◆ Relaying public comments to Council and identifying new areas and groups for public outreach
- ◆ Advising Council on the needs for public education regarding WILMAPCO and regional transportation policies
- ◆ Advising Council on the effectiveness of public outreach for Action Items

All meetings of the WILMAPCO Council, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Public Advisory Committee (PAC), and their Subcommittees are open to the public. WILMAPCO encourages all members of the community to participate in the transportation planning processes. If, because of a disability, special assistance is required, WILMAPCO will endeavor to meet those needs. Upon request, WILMAPCO will also provide a professional interpretation of any document, presentation, meeting, or survey to speakers of any language. All WILMAPCO meeting information can be found on the homepage of our website at www.wilmapco.org.

Importance of Public Input

Public involvement is a key component of the transportation planning and programming process. A proactive public involvement process is one that provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access to major transportation decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing transportation plans and programs. The main aim of public participation is to encourage the public to have meaningful input into the decision-making process. Public participation thus provides the opportunity for communication between agencies making decisions and the communities affected by them.

WILMAPCO also makes extra efforts to reach out to people who are underserved by transportation investments, such as low-income and minority households. We strive to include seniors, disabled, and zero car households in the planning process. In addition to

ensuring that these community members are involved, we must show that transportation investments are not adversely impacting these populations and that improvements are equitably distributed to all.

Purpose of the Public Participation Plan (PPP)

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) is a guide for WILMAPCO's public participation endeavors. Its purpose is to ensure that WILMAPCO utilizes effective means of providing information and receiving public input on transportation decisions that ensure all our regional transportation plans, programs, and studies include adequate public involvement prior to action by the Council. WILMAPCO strives to employ "proactive" public involvement procedures that go beyond merely providing notice of decisions, but rather, provide opportunities for "early and continuing involvement throughout the transportation planning process." The Public Participation Plan also serves to describe the process of how the public can be involved in the transportation decision-making.

Public Participation Plan Development Process

In order to ensure that the goals and objectives of the PPP directly reflected those of the public, WILMAPCO took the following actions:

- ◆ Conducted best practices research
- ◆ Participated in a Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration Peer Exchange
- ◆ Conducted a web-based Public Participation Survey
- ◆ Included public outreach questions in a (statistically valid/demographically weighted) telephone public opinion survey
- ◆ Consulted with member agencies through PAC, TAC and Council presentations
- ◆ Conducted a joint public workshop with the Delaware Dept. of Transportation (DelDOT)
- ◆ Conducted a 45-day public comment period

Comments and survey data from the PPP development process are used throughout this document. The survey conducted during the PPP development process was not intended to be statistically valid, but was included as additional support to public input which was received.

Public Participation Survey Results

WILMAPCO conducted an online public participation survey from May 2019 through July 2019 in English and Spanish. The English language version of the survey had 171 respondents while the Spanish language version had eight. While not a statistically valid nor demographically-representative survey, it does give us some clues as to preferred outreach methods and possible barriers.

Respondents were asked to answer questions about public outreach and what methods they felt were most effective. Respondents were also asked their opinion on how good of a job WILMAPCO has been doing at reaching out to the public. Overall, despite 64% reporting familiarity with WILMAPCO, nearly 70% report not knowing how to get involved or not understanding the transportation planning process.

Not knowing how to get involved in the planning process was reported as the biggest barrier to participation by over 40% of respondents, with lack of free time (34%) and lack of understanding of the process (28%) also deterrents. The outreach strategies outlined in this plan and employed by WILMAPCO seek to address these and other challenges.



Public Participation Plan Requirements

FAST (Fixing America's Surface Transportation) Act

The FAST Act requires that MPOs “shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.” (81 FR 93473, 2016)

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) states that “no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or

be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity.” Sites for participation activities and the information presented must be accessible to persons with disabilities.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, together with related statutes and regulations, provide that “no person shall on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal funds. The entire institution, whether educational, private or governmental, must comply with Title VI and related Federal civil rights laws, not just the program or activity receiving federal funds.”

Executive orders regarding environmental justice and outreach to persons with limited English proficiency are also regulated under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994, states that “each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.” Underserved groups such as low-income and minority populations must be identified and given increased opportunity for involvement in order to ensure effective participation.

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, 2000, requires that recipients of federal financial aid must ensure that the programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to persons with limited English proficiency.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

This section provides guidelines for how WILMAPCO will encourage the public and interested parties to participate in the development, adoption, amendment, and review of the major MPO plans. Federal law requires public outreach during the production of four mandated documents: The long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Public Participation Plan (PPP). WILMAPCO provides numerous opportunities for public participation in the process of creating these and all of its other plans.

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

The Regional Transportation Plan sets out a vision for the WILMAPCO region spanning at least 20 years. It is updated every four years to incorporate new trends and demographic data. It lists goals WILMAPCO will strive to achieve and strategies used to

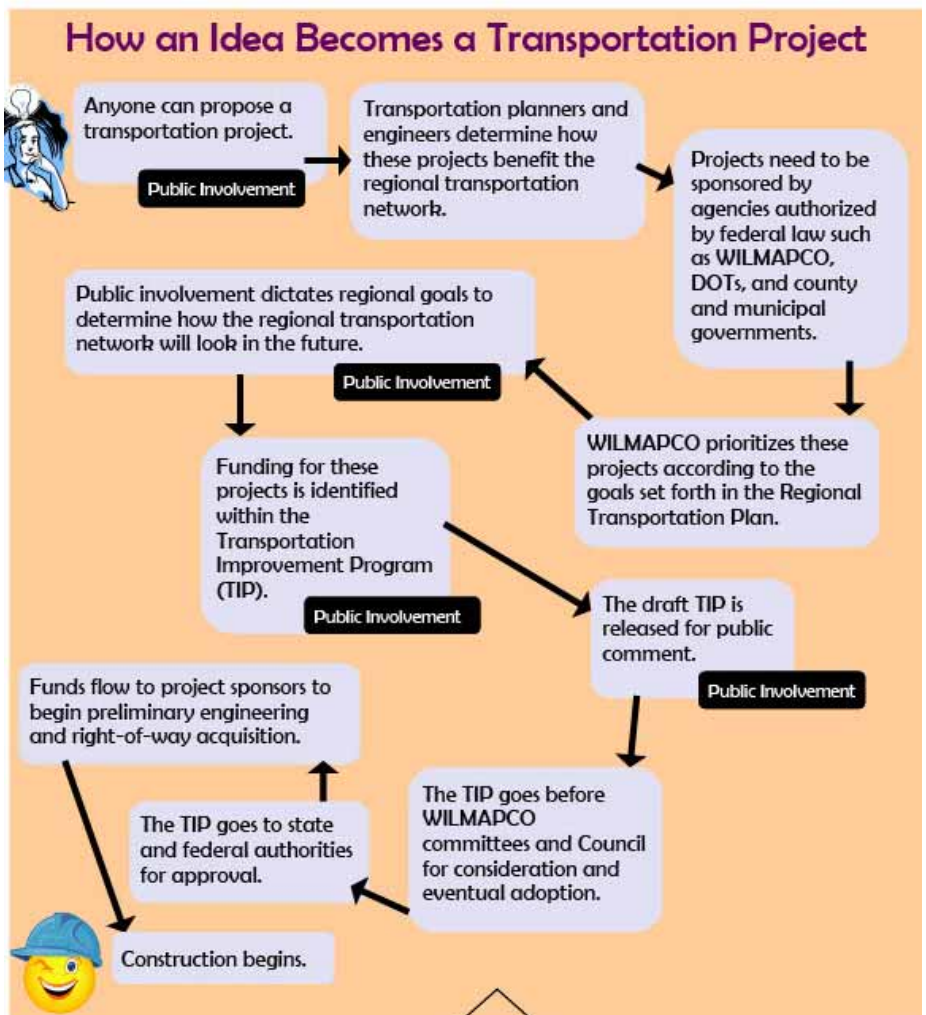
accomplish them. Needed transportation improvements identified in the RTP are then included in the TIP to be funded and constructed.

WILMAPCO’s 2050 RTP outreach strategy utilized both technological tools, including Metroquest (public outreach software) and a Virtual Public Workshop; and low technology strategies, such as engaging branding and in-person pop-up events. To facilitate a high-level of public engagement, social media played a large role. Through social media, we were able to communicate with thousands, disseminate project updates, and provide a source for feedback and communication.

Additional outreach strategies employed, included presentations to more than a dozen civic and municipal organizations, consultations with all our member agencies and our biannual Our Town event. The Our Town event, attended by more than 100, featured the 2050 RTP and the long-range plans of several other agencies including DeIDOT, MDOT, New Castle County, and the City of Wilmington. In total, we engaged with over 1200 individuals and received 639 comments on the draft plan. All the comments received and our responses can be found in the appendix of the 2050 RTP available at www.wilmapco.org/rtp.

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program is a document that describes the funding for projects to be undertaken in our region over the next four years. It is updated every two years to make adjustments to previously scheduled work. WILMAPCO solicits project ideas from agencies, municipalities, and the public throughout the year, which are then submitted to DeIDOT and MDOT. Comments are solicited at several key times during the process before the final document is adopted by the WILMAPCO Council. More information can be found at www.wilmapco.org/tip.



Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program is a twelve-month document (running from July 1 to June 30) that specifies what planning activities WILMAPCO staff and member agencies will undertake during the coming year. It serves as a programmable budget and spells out the operating needs for WILMAPCO and its staff. WILMAPCO's UPWP can be found at www.wilmapco.org/UPWP.

Drafts of the RTP, TIP, and UPWP and major amendments to those documents are distributed to several libraries in New Castle County and one in Cecil County. These documents are also distributed to the planning offices of:

- ◆ The State of Delaware
- ◆ The State of Maryland
- ◆ Cecil County
- ◆ New Castle County
- ◆ The City of Wilmington
- ◆ The City of Elkton
- ◆ The City of Newark
- ◆ Delaware Department of Transportation
- ◆ Maryland Departments of Transportation

Documents are also made available at our office and on our website for at least a thirty-day public comment period prior to their adoption. One or more public workshops are held for the TIP and RTP during the public comment period to provide additional opportunity for review and comment, and social media tools are used to promote the availability of documents for comment. The WILMAPCO Council will consider each plan for adoption after all comments are received, documented, evaluated, and addressed.

- ◆ Public Participation Plan – Forty-five (45) day public review and comment period
- ◆ Regional Transportation Plan – Forty-five (45) public review and comment period
- ◆ Transportation Improvement Plan – Thirty (30) day public review and comment period
- ◆ Unified Planning Work Program – Thirty (30) day public review and comment period



Transportation Equity

Transportation Equity, often referred to as Environmental Justice (EJ), is based in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and a 1994 Presidential Executive Order making equity part of the mission of every federal agency. Ethnic and racial minorities are often underrepresented in the planning processes. EJ populations include low-income, ethnic and racial minorities, and those with limited English language skills or Limited English Proficiency (LEP). WILMAPCO has taken EJ a step further and also includes those who are Mobility Challenged (MC) such as seniors, disabled, and those without access to a vehicle. WILMAPCO's 2019 Transportation Justice (TJ) Plan found that neighborhoods in our region with concentrations of African American residents are chronically underfunded with transportation dollars and experience increased traffic and higher pedestrian crash rates. The report also found that low income communities were much less likely to be aware of WILMAPCO, and thus participate in the MPO planning process. To begin to correct these and other inequities, the TJ Plan makes several outreach recommendations that have been incorporated in this plan.



Communities of particular concern identified in the TJ plan include ethnic and racial minorities, low income, those with disabilities, female-headed households with children, and those with Limited Language Proficiency. When working in these communities, additional strategies for public engagement are recommended by the TJ Plan to help address identified inequities. Highlighted recommendations for public engagement include:

- As an agency, WILMAPCO will work to promote more inclusive organizational practices, cultural proficiency, and more.
- In regional studies, WILMAPCO will diversify outreach techniques, strive for equitable public participation (by race/class), build stronger relationships with minority cultural institutions, and more.

- In local studies, WILMAPCO will invest in relationship building, encourage local leadership in studies, acknowledge any past harm done by transportation and land use planning, strive for equitable and iterative participation, aim for community empowerment, and more.

Community and Area Planning

WILMAPCO’s community and area planning efforts work to address the need to improve coordination between transportation and land use decision-making and serve to implement the goals and policies of the RTP. Community planning encompasses strategies that link land use and transportation, systematically working through neighborhood-based problems. These studies and plans link land use and transportation, seek to improve quality of life, strengthen communities, and improve intergovernmental relations between the state and local levels by providing local assistance in comprehensive plans, planning and hosting charrettes and workshops, and conducting community studies and plans.

WILMAPCO’s community studies have extensive public outreach opportunities that may include several public workshop, virtual workshops, pop-up events, community events and presentations, community advisory committees, social media, online and paper surveys, youth engagement, media engagement, nonprofit partnerships, and other outreach strategies as recommended by advisory and WILMAPCO committees.

More information regarding WILMAPCO’s community and area planning efforts can be found on WILMAPCO’s website at www.wilmapco.org/plans-and-reports.



Intraregional Coordination

As an MPO, WILMAPCO is responsible for actively seeking the participation of all relevant agencies and stakeholders and for coordinating programs with them. WILMAPCO also works together with partners for more effective outreach activities. Because outreach activities are so important to WILMAPCO's mission, WILMAPCO reserves the right to refuse to participate in meetings or projects that do not provide adequate public involvement. Coordination with partners may include:

- ◆ Providing accurate and timely technical support to partners
- ◆ Offering data services to municipalities, communities, and organizations
- ◆ Reaching out to municipalities by seeking TIP and UPWP submissions, offering planning services, and soliciting suggestions when updating the RTP
- ◆ Coordinating on issues that extend beyond the WILMAPCO region's borders

WILMAPCO'S OUTREACH PHILOSOPHY

Public involvement and participation in planning is an ongoing process that is essential to meeting the needs of the region's residents. Effective planning cannot be achieved in a vacuum. To achieve the objectives of the Public Participation Plan, WILMAPCO subscribes to the following overarching public outreach philosophies:

- ◆ Not only meet, but exceed federal regulations
- ◆ Go where the people are
- ◆ Create meaningful two-way communication
- ◆ Develop easily understood plans and reports
- ◆ Utilize new and creative ways to engage the public
- ◆ Strive for socially equitable, representative involvement
- ◆ Provide extra support to overcome the societal barriers of age, gender, language, literacy, disability, income and race to achieve inclusive public engagement
- ◆ Employ a multipronged approach to public outreach



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

This section of the Public Participation Plan defines the goals, objectives, and actions that govern the implementation of public outreach for WILMAPCO.

GOAL ONE: Widely disseminate, clear, complete, and timely information to residents, affected agencies, and interested parties.

Objective 1: *WILMAPCO will identify organizations and individuals representing a broad spectrum of community interests and encourage their participation in transportation planning processes.*

Action 1: WILMAPCO will seek participation and comment from all segments of the public.

Action 2: WILMAPCO will work to identify new stakeholders interested in or affected by the transportation planning process.

Action 3: WILMAPCO will work to identify and encourage participation of underserved populations within the region, especially minority, low income, disabled, female headed households with children, and those with Limited Language Proficiency.

Action 4: WILMAPCO will work to consistently engage youth in the planning process.

Objective 2: *WILMAPCO will develop relationships and form partnerships with organizations and the communities WILMAPCO serves.*

Action 1: WILMAPCO will solicit opportunities to presentations during civic, municipal, county, and other stakeholder group meetings to provide pertinent information regarding its planning efforts.

Action 2: WILMAPCO will participate in activities such as festivals, workshops, and summer camps conducted by partner organizations.

Action 3: WILMAPCO will distribute and make literature available at other agencies' locations and events.

Objective 3: *Coordinate public involvement activities with other similar programs to make best use of staff and resources while minimizing public time demands.*

Action 1: WILMAPCO will coordinate and, where possible, collaborate with the public involvement efforts of other jurisdictions, agencies, nonprofits, and community representatives.

Action 2: WILMAPCO will participate in local conferences and events by exhibiting display booths to increase awareness of specific projects and general WILMAPCO activities.

Action 3: WILMAPCO will conduct seminars and conferences to engage the public and our members on design, development, and technology advances that will help further our goals.

Objective 4: *Information will be disseminated through a variety of media.*

Action 1: WILMAPCO will develop and use a variety of visualization techniques to disseminate information, including: PowerPoint presentations, display boards, maps, Google interactive and Wiki mapping, videos, social media, webinars and virtual workshops, and its website to assist in communicating with the public.

Action 2: WILMAPCO will use its website and social media to publish and make available its plans and studies and to inform the public about opportunities to participate.

Action 3: WILMAPCO will produce a quarterly printed newsletter, the *Transporter*, which will be mailed to interested residents and a monthly electronic newsletter, *WILMAPCO's E-News*.

Action 4: WILMAPCO will provide press releases to local media (radio, TV, and newspapers) and local civic organizations to promote meetings, events, major policy issues, and document changes.

Objective 5: *Transportation planning information will be conveyed in language and in a context that is understandable to everyone.*

Action 1: Acronyms, abbreviations, and jargon will be kept to a minimum in information prepared for the public.

Action 2: WILMAPCO will provide the necessary background information in the documents it prepares to help residents understand the transportation planning process and programs.

Action 3: Public Advisory Committee will review WILMAPCO plans and studies for ease of reading and understandability.

GOAL TWO: Create an open and ongoing two-way public involvement process that ensures full resident, agency, and interested party participation in, and input into, regional transportation planning.

Objective 1: *WILMAPCO will conduct surveys to better understand concerns and interests and use this information to target message more effectively.*

Action 1: WILMAPCO will administer its Public Opinion Survey for New Castle and Cecil counties in concurrence with Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) updates every four years. The results will be used to monitor public concerns and opinions on RTP strategies and awareness of WILMAPCO.

Action 2: WILMAPCO will conduct surveys using web, paper-based, and sticker board methods as projects require.

Objective 2: *WILMAPCO will seek to exceed federal requirements for public outreach.*

Action 1: WILMAPCO will seek public guidance when developing policies, identifying issues, gathering ideas, developing alternatives, setting evaluation criteria, and selecting the best alternatives.

Action 2: WILMAPCO's Public Outreach Manager will oversee the outreach strategy for all studies.

Action 3: WILMAPCO will provide a minimum of 30 days for review of and comment on draft planning documents (RTP and amendments, TIP and major amendments, and recommendations associated with any study) prior to consideration by Council for final adoption.

Action 4: WILMAPCO staff will make all draft documents available through its website for public comment.

Action 5: Public comments will be received, reviewed and, when appropriate, incorporated into planning documents. When producing the Public Participation Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, and Transportation Improvement Program, comments will be recorded and included in the final document.

Action 6: WILMAPCO will utilize social media and or videos to promote and encourage participation in the planning process.

Objective 3: *WILMAPCO will work with community stakeholders and land use and transportation agencies to coordinate transportation and land use planning activities through program development and community/area plans and studies.*

Action 1: Community stakeholders will participate in the development and scoping of a variety of plans and studies that help implement the goals and strategies of the long-range plan.

Action 2: Legislative briefings for area elected officials will be held as determined by community and area planning advisory committees.

Action 3: Meetings will be held in a variety of locations to reach a wider audience. Meetings will be held in locations that are multi-modal and accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

GOAL THREE: Achieve early and continuous involvement of the public in the development of transportation plans, projects, and programs.

Objective 1: *Increase public understanding of the processes used to make transportation planning decisions and increase the public's willingness to get involved by convincing them they can make a difference.*

Action 1: WILMAPCO staff will develop easy-to-understand materials and presentations that break down and explain steps in decision making processes and typical timelines involved.

Action 2: WILMAPCO will use real examples and success stories to demonstrate how public ideas have influenced planning outcomes.

Action 3: WILMAPCO will promote awareness of its achievements and capabilities.

Objective 2: *Public participation strategies will be tailored to fit the audience and the issues, rather than using a "one size fits all" approach.*

Action 1: WILMAPCO will strive to understand the interests and concerns of target audiences in order to determine the most relevant content and most effective ways to communicate with each segment.

Action 2: WILMAPCO will target specific audiences, go where the people are, and create or participate in events targeted to those audiences.

Action 3: WILMAPCO will ensure a professional look and feel for communications and tailor content and format for ease of use and understanding.

Objective 3: *WILMAPCO will promote events and connect with each audience through a variety of channels and media.*

Action 1: A variety of techniques will be used to promote all events. These may include flyers, postcards, press releases, and social media pages and “events.” Details will be provided on the homepage of WILMAPCO’s website, in its monthly electronic newsletter, *E-news*, and via social media.

Action 2: A calendar of events will be posted in WILMAPCO’s *Transporter* to advise the public of upcoming meetings.

Action 3: WILMAPCO meeting dates and agendas will be published on the homepage of its website.

Action 4: WILMAPCO will strive to promote all meetings and events for at least 30 days prior to the event.

Action 5: WILMAPCO will strive to make as much information as possible available prior to meetings and events, including detailed agendas and descriptions of meeting formats and outcomes.

Objective 4: *WILMAPCO will seek to improve its public participation program by regularly reviewing this plan and its outreach activities.*

Action 1: WILMAPCO will regularly survey the public on the best ways to provide information, increase engagement, and utilize public input, and will incorporate resulting recommendations into the Public Participation Plan.

Action 2: WILMAPCO will periodically update this Public Participation Plan. The public will have 45 days to review and comment on proposed updates before they are considered for adoption by the WILMAPCO Council.

Action 3: If the initial public review results in major proposed changes, a second 45-day public comment period will be held to review and comment on the latest version before it is sent to the Council for adoption.

Action 4: WILMAPCO will utilize its Progress Report to evaluate progress on its Regional Transportation Plan and Public Participation Plan.

Action 5: WILMAPCO will conduct a standalone periodic PPP Evaluation.

GOAL FOUR: Achieve cultural proficiency and empower local communities to ensure socially equitable and representative involvement in all WILMAPCO plans, programs, and policies.

Objective 1: *WILMAPCO will be proactive in promoting cultural diversity and seek opportunities to improve relationships with various cultures within the context of transportation planning.*

Action 1: WILMAPCO staff will participate in cultural competency, Title VI/EJ and public participation training.

Action 2: WILMAPCO will work to build relationships with African American, Latino, and Asian cultural institutions, and media outlets.

Objective 2: *Develop organizational practices (i.e., hiring, workshop locations, language assistance, survey techniques) that integrate cultural groups of all ages.*

Action 1: Continue to include demographic quotas in WILMAPCO's Public Opinion Survey to ensure a demographically representative survey sample.

Action 2: Allow self-identification of gender in surveys.

Action 3: Achieve equitable representation of minorities on the Public Advisory Committee.

Objective 3: *WILMAPCO will strive to collaborate with and empower all communities, particularly low-income and minority communities, in the development and implementation of plans.*

Action 1: Invest in continuous relationship building with local leaders and the community.

Action 2: Partner with and work through trusted community-based organizations and local civic groups.

Action 3: Invite and encourage residents to participate with decision-making during study development and a post-study monitoring committee with a representative cross-section within the community, a clear mission, transparency and accountability, and a consistent schedule.

Action 4: Acknowledge any past harm done by transportation and land use decisions and incorporate other trauma-informed community engagement practices¹ in communities experiencing chronic social inequities.

¹ See 2019 TJ Plan.

Action 5: Empower community members to conduct surveys, facilitate meetings, and provide explanations.

Action 6: Frame the plan in a way that is relevant to the local community.

Objective 4: *Strive for equitable public meetings and public participation in all plans, studies, and programs.*

Action 1: Schools, libraries, and trusted community centers are preferred public meeting locations.

Action 2: Provide childcare at public meetings, especially to support female-headed households with children's participation.

Action 3: Work with local partners to provide the food and/or offer other incentives to encourage participation and/or relieve economic burdens of attendance.

Action 4: Work with the local community to choose meeting venues and times that are accessible by public transportation, convenient and trusted by the community.

Action 5: Work with, but do not solely rely on the community to promote events.

Action 6: Pursue equitable demographic public feedback, by race and class, for all regional studies.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

As more and more people obtain and share information online, social media has become an important communication tool and part of WILMAPCO's public involvement strategy. Social media tools such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Nextdoor may be used to supplement traditional communication methods and increase meaningful interaction with the communities WILMAPCO serves.

Information received by social media users in the form of comments, @replies, direct messages, or any other method will be treated as feedback and discussion and will not constitute official public comment. Whenever possible, links will be provided to users to submit official comment.

WILMAPCO may share articles, websites, or online information produced by outside sources as appropriate. Information may include newspaper articles, municipal websites, other transportation and/or planning agencies or other informational content. WILMAPCO may share these items as “information only” and does not endorse, support, or have responsibility for the accuracy for these items.

WILMAPCO does not allow explicit or profane language or content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation, nor is sexual content or links to sexual content permitted on WILMAPCO’s social media pages. WILMAPCO does not allow comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity. WILMAPCO’s social media channels are not open to comments promoting or opposing any person campaigning for election to a political office or promoting or opposing any ballot proposition. WILMAPCO reserves the right to remove any content that violates this policy. WILMAPCO may also use a social media’s “blocking” feature for repeat offenders of this policy.

OUTREACH STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

Transportation planners are responsible for developing a unique public engagement strategy for each project that uses the appropriate techniques for the project and target audience. The 2019 Public Participation Survey indicated that a large percentage of the community only becomes involved in the transportation planning process when the projects or issues are of personal interest to them. The community also indicated that they do not have enough free time to participate in planning activities or do not know how to get involved. Overcoming these issues will require finding a balance of various techniques and strategies that will result in more people and interest groups getting involved in the planning process. The following are some examples of outreach techniques and strategies that may be used:

Advertisements	This may include paid social media, radio, newspaper, and tv as deemed appropriate for the community being targeted and scope of the project budget.
Advisory and Monitoring Committees	Make recommendations on projects, plans, and policies to assist the MPO Council in making informed decisions. The make-up of resident-based groups should reflect the community’s demographic composition.

Charrettes	A meeting format designed to define issues, analyze problems and develop solutions in a short, intense time frame to reach consensus on approaches to be taken, usually involving local experts and targeted stakeholders defining values and expectations in the process.
Community Liaisons	Professionals or volunteers who have knowledge of the local community being targeted, relationships with community leaders within the community, and the cultural and linguistic competency to help engage communities in planning.
Contests and Games	Increase community involvement through a game or activity created to encourage public involvement in an idea, proposal, or project.
Database	Allows participants, stakeholders, and agency information to be entered in a manner that is easily sorted and retrieved.
Exhibit Table	Information table to inform the community of project activities and opportunities to participate in the planning process
Flyers	Announcements of upcoming public meetings or events that are posted and handed out in communities affected by plans.
Focus Groups	A meeting where a set of questions is posed to participants. A facilitator is necessary and the number of participants is limited.
Geofencing	A tool that allows information to be sent to a user's phone when they enter a defined area.
Informational Brochures	Develop & distribute informational brochures regarding current transportation issues.
Interactive Maps	An interactive visioning tool using GIS data and/or Google mapping to help people better understand the relationship between transportation and land use or the details of projects.
Local Cable Access Stations (WITN Channel 22)	Broadcast spots that inform the community about events and meetings.

Logos	A study logo helps create brand recognition through all phases of plans and studies.
Newsletter	A periodic newsletter providing summaries of WILMAPCO plans, studies, and outreach efforts including a calendar of upcoming events.
Partnering with Community Organizations	Partnering with community-based organizations and leaders to promote and hold meetings, facilitate discussions, and obtain feedback on plans.
Plain Language	Plans and presentations should always strive to be clear, concise, free of technical jargon, understandable to the lay person.
Popup Workshops	A portable, stationary, or interactive display of project background and current information that can be moved to community sites or special events to improve awareness and response collection by stakeholders.
Presentations	A tool for reaching out to agencies, community groups and advisory committees, helping to tell our story and explain plans and projects using visuals and allowing for Q&A or discussions.
Press Releases	Press releases are free and can generate print, television, and radio coverage going beyond purchased legal and display ads to encourage participation in MPO activities and events and keep people who cannot attend involved and aware.
Public Workshops	Interactive meetings to which all community members are invited, information is shared, project questions are asked and answered, and awareness is increased. Public Workshops provide information to the community in a forum that allows people to feel comfortable & are encouraged to contribute meaningful feedback in a non-threatening atmosphere prior to decisions being made.
Surveys	Can be used at community events, direct-mailed, or online. Can also be distributed at the end of events to get feedback on the event itself.

Transportation Planning Guide	Produced and distributed to provide a concise informative tool for residents on the various ways they can be involved in transportation planning and RTP updates.
Videos	Recorded visual and audio messages that are easy to understand and visually appealing to help explain the MPO process and/or recommendations of planning studies with particular attention paid to the public's role in that process.
Walkable Community Workshops	Organized group walking or biking workshops enable community members to see and or point out problems, assets, and resources important to the community.
Website: www.wilmapco.org	Where the community can immediately access calendars, agendas, interactive maps, links to related sites, general study information, and most WILMAPCO publications.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Complete Streets. Streets that provide for safe, convenient, efficient, and accessible use by pedestrians of all ages and abilities, bicyclists, transit vehicles and motor vehicles. Communities with complete streets policies are making sure that their streets work for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists, as well as for older adults, children, and persons with disabilities.

Congestion Management System (CMS). Systematic process for managing congestion. Provides information on transportation system performance and finds alternative ways to alleviate congestion and enhance the mobility of people and goods, to levels that meet state and local needs. This is required in larger metropolitan areas (populations of 200,000 or more).

Department of Transportation (DOT). When used alone, generally indicates the U.S. Department of Transportation. In conjunction with a place name, indicates state, city, or county transportation agency (e.g., Illinois DOT, Los Angeles DOT).

Environmental Justice (EJ). Identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of transportation programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation that administers the Federal-Aid Highway Program, principally providing financial assistance and technical and programmatic support to states to construct and improve highways, urban and rural roads, and bridges.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation that provides financial and other resources to transit agencies (known as transit providers) in developing and improving public transportation equipment, facilities, services, techniques, and methods.

Fiscal Constraint. Making sure that a given investment program or a specific project can reasonably expect to receive funding within the time allotted for its implementation.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). The application of advanced technologies to improve the efficiency and safety of roads and transit services.

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). Federal law that restructured funding for transportation programs; authorized an increased role for regional planning agencies/MPOs in funding decisions; required comprehensive regional and statewide long-term transportation plans; and provided for a uniform federal match for highway and transit projects.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). A multi-year transportation plan developed by state DOTs and MPOs in collaboration with a range of stakeholders that defines a vision for the

region's or state's transportation systems and services. For metropolitan areas, it includes all transportation improvements proposed for funding over the next 20 years.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). A regional policy agency established by the state to serve urbanized areas with populations over 50,000. The MPO is responsible for cooperating with the state and other transportation providers in carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning requirements of federal highway and transit legislation.

Public Participation. The active and meaningful involvement of the public in the development of transportation plans and programs.

State Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). A new requirement under SAFETEA-LU requiring state DOTs to prepare a highway safety plan focused on strategies to reduce fatalities and injuries, including how HSIP funds are to be expended.

State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). A multi-year, statewide, intermodal program of transportation projects, consistent with the statewide transportation plan and planning processes as well as metropolitan plans, TIPs, and processes.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD). is a mixed-use residential or commercial area designed to maximize access to public transport, and often incorporates features to encourage transit ridership.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). A document prepared by a metropolitan planning organization that lists projects to be funded with FHWA/FTA funds over a four- or five-year period.

Transportation Justice (TJ). Identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of transportation programs, policies, and activities on seniors, the disabled, and households without an automobile.

Transportation Management Area (TMA). An urbanized area over 200,000 in population.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The management plan for the metropolitan planning program. Its purpose is to coordinate the planning activities of all participants in the planning process.