

PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WILMAPCO Hybrid-format Meeting, June 12, 2023

Minutes prepared by Dawn Voss.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski, PAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Mark Blake, GHADA
Tracy Chamblee, Southern New Castle County Alliance
Carlos de los Ramos, AARP
Bill Dunn, Civic League for New Castle County
Patricia Folk, Cecil County
Richard Janney, Southern New Castle County
Mike Kaszyski, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and PAC Chair
Bill Lower, Committee of 100
Barry Shotwell, 7/40 Alliance
Joshua Solge, City of Newark
Dave Tancredi, Milltown-Limestone Civic Alliance

Absent:

Serene Abiy, University of Delaware
Mario Gangemi, Cecil County Chamber of Commerce
Ken Grant, AAA Mid-Atlantic
Deanna Murphy, Cecil County Board of Realtors
Glenn Pusey, Bear Glasgow Council
Anna Quisel, League of Women Voters of New Castle County
Gail Seitz, City of New Castle
Vic Singer, Civic League for New Castle County

Staff Members:

Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner
Dawn Voss, Administrative Assistant
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Guests:

Cathy Smith, DTC
Bianca Mers, Reach Riverside
Ava Sproul, Reach Riverside
Joachim Vollmayes, Reach Riverside

2. Approval of the April 17, 2023 Meeting Minutes

ACTION: On a motion by Mr. Barry Shotwell and seconded by Mr. Richard Janney the PAC approved the April 17, 2023 meeting minutes.

Motion passed

(06-12-23-01)

3. Public Comment Period:

Ms. Bianca Mers said she is a Community Investment Analyst from Reach Riverside. They are admirers of WILMAPCO and the work that they do. They had some great conversations with Mr. Dave Gula and the team about the 12th Street Connector. They attended the meeting to learn more about WILMAPCO's process, current work, and to see how we can work together.

4. Executive Director's Report:

Ms. Tigist Zegeye shared the following public outreach information:

- Council met on May 11th. They approved John Sisson to continue as Chair and Stephen O'Connor as Vice-Chair. Council approved the FY 2024 UPWP and the technical scoring for project prioritization for the FY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program. They adopted the Delaware and Maryland Transportation Performance Measure Targets. Presentations included the Churchman's Crossing and Concord Pike Monitoring Reports and Public Outreach, the 2023 Transportation Justice Bus Connectivity Analysis, and New Castle County Safe Streets for All.
- The Churchman Crossing Monitoring Committee had a public meeting on April 19th and a Monitoring Committee meeting on May 24th with fourteen members present.
- Staff had a Southbridge Transportation Action Plan pop-up at the Wilmington Open Streets event in Southbridge on April 22nd.
- The Concord Pike Monitoring 2023 Public Workshop was held on May 3rd with forty-five attendees in person, and eleven online.
- For National Bike Month, staff attended the Downes Elementary School Bike to School Day with forty students on May 3rd, participated in Bike to Work Day on May 19th, and attended the Downes Elementary School Bike Rodeo with one hundred and forty students participating on May 30th. The City of Newark was named a Silver Bicycle-Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. Staff helped them with their application.
- The North Claymont and Governor Printz Boulevard Monitoring Public Workshop was held on May 4th with fifty attendees. The committee will meet in late June to finalize the report.
- Staff attended the Newport Riverfront Trail Workshop on May 8th.
- Staff delivered the keynote presentation at the Commercial Industrial Reality Council meeting on May 10th.
- The Arden Transportation Plan held their final Public Workshop on June 6th.
- Staff participated in the West Side Grows Together Steering Committee on June 5th where they discussed the West Side Revitalization Plan.
- Staff co-hosted the Delaware Freight Summit on June 7th.
- The Southbridge Transportation Action Plan held a final Public Workshop on June 10th.
- The Wilmington Initiatives Open House Workshop will be held on June 15th with at least twelve projects on display.
- Staff is coordinating with DVRPC on a climate pollution reduction grant for the Philadelphia MSA. DVRPC will be taking the lead on this and WILMAPCO will be supporting our region.
- An RFP was issued for consultant services to develop the East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan. This was submitted to the UPWP as two projects, Muddy Lane/Delancey Road Corridor Study, and Belle Hill Road Safety Audit, but staff combined them. Proposals are due on June 26th.
- The Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration have jointly approved our Conformity Determination for the 2050 Long Range Plan. Federal Highway Administration also approved the FY 2024 Work Program which will start on July 1st.

Mr. Bill Dunn asked who is representing the Brandywine Hundred area on the PAC. Mr. Mike Kaszyski said no one. Mr. Dunn recommended reaching out to Mr. R.J. Miles, president of CCOBH, who was active with the Concord Pike Plan. Mr. Dave Gula said Mr. Miles is a board member now. We can reach out to him. Ms. Zegeye said the latest PAC representation from civic groups includes the New Castle County Civic League, Milltown, Limestone Civic Association, Claymont, Bear-Glasgow, and Pike Creek. It does not appear that they are a PAC member. Mr. Dunn said previously there was someone from the area and it is a core area for the Concord Pike Corridor Plan. Mr. Mark Blake said no one from Brandywine has been in the minutes since 2015. They have been invited in the past, but nobody has joined.

ACTION ITEMS:

None

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

5. Safe Streets for All

Ms. Heather Dunigan said the country is experiencing unprecedented numbers of traffic crashes and fatalities. Last year Delaware tied its record from 1988 for the most fatal crashes, which is surprising because cars in 1988. Existing transportation safety, educational messages, and enforcement campaigns are not enough. This plan is a paradigm shift, from trying to prevent crashes to making crashes less severe. People make mistakes. We need to design for those mistakes. Crashes become more severe at faster speeds, so we need to plan appropriate speed for the surrounding land uses. We need to stop victim-blaming. We cannot rely just on enforcement. Data indicates where crashes occur in greater numbers and severity so we can be proactive with a Safe Systems approach. This approach has become an international movement, and places that adopted this approach have seen a reduction in the number of fatalities and serious crashes. It emphasizes redundancy as the more layers of protection there are, the less likely the crashes will be severe.

Staff worked with the University of Delaware to analyze crash data and did additional GIS to better understand the crash patterns and factors involved. Community outreach was done, and recommendations are being developed. The public outreach included an online survey and interactive map, and pop-up events. There were ninety-one responses to the survey from across the region. There were three-hundred and seventy-five responses to the interactive map. At the pop-up events, we spoke with the public one-on-one and took “selfies for safety”, where people shared their ideas for improving safety. From the survey, we found most people drive for transportation, but we heard from a variety of types of transportation users. Most respondents did not have personal experience with crashes, though some did. Many people felt lack of knowledge and education and lack of enforcement were major contributors to crashes. Many respondents thought missing walking, bicycling, and transit connections, and missing crosswalks contribute to the number and severity of crashes. When asked about behaviors, speeding had the strongest response, followed by drivers not following the law and distracted people. Respondents support prioritizing streets that have no sidewalks, then areas with high numbers of crashes, then locations with high traffic volumes, then proximity to community destinations. Every respondent selected at least one equity criteria in their response, which indicates an understanding that some populations are more impacted by traffic crashes than others. People support off-street pedestrian and bike paths, land use that focuses on safety, and reduced speed limits in residential areas and areas with many pedestrians. There is less

support for roundabouts. People support automated red-light cameras, but there is less support for automated speed enforcement. We do not want to rely exclusively on enforcement but want the roads and conditions to be self-enforcing. People support strategies that prioritize safety for people walking and education strategies, but there is less support for offering education programs instead of fines for first time violations. The interactive map will be posted to the website so the public can review the comments. The pop-up events were at the Open Streets event in Southbridge, Newark Greenfest, and at the Claymont Library as part of a workshop. From the feedback received, a draft goal was created, which is a 50% reduction in serious injuries and crashes by 2030, and then reaching for a goal of Vision Zero by 2040.

Mr. Bill Dunn noticed the numbers of fatalities are close year-over-year and asked what the corresponding numbers are. Ms. Dunigan said she only had the totals on the chart but will have those numbers broken out in the draft report. We do not have good 2022 New Castle County-specific data, but it increased again. New Castle County has the most fatal and injury crashes in the State of Delaware. Mr. Dunn asked if they define a fatality as at the time of the accident or later. Ms. Dunigan said they wait if somebody is hospitalized for a crash to see what the final outcome is. Mr. Carlos de los Ramos asked that this information be shared with the members as it is interesting that the numbers rose in 2020 and 2021, in the midst of the pandemic when supposedly people were not out. Ms. Dungan said the thinking on that is, because there was less congestion during that time, there was more speeding, and crashes increased in severity. One of our challenges is that crash reporting is done in the field with a form that does not capture details.

From comments received from the public, the following draft core values were developed that will guide the plan. Everybody, regardless of their background, ability, or age, deserves a safe place to live in and travel around, and no groups should be disproportionately impacted by traffic crashes. We must prioritize and work together to make this happen. How we achieve this must be driven proactively by data and by community engagement. Our quest for Vision Zero is not done until there are none.

Mr. Dunn asked if the fatalities reflect pedestrian, bike, and auto. Ms. Dunigan said it does and shared maps that showed pedestrian and bicycle crashes are concentrated in the northern part of New Castle County, particularly in the City of Wilmington and the City of Newark. Crashes in environmental justice or mobility-challenged areas are concentrated in and near the City of Wilmington. This data was used to create a high-injury crash network, which FHWA wants on their Safe Streets for All grant applications. Identifying this network will help prioritize projects. Ms. Dunigan said around 60% of crashes causing severe injuries and fatalities are listed in reports as caused by aggressive, careless, or reckless driving; failure to yield right of way; pedestrian crashes; driver inattention; or driving under the influence. Only 4% showed speeding as the cause. Though the data may not indicate speeding, it must be part of our conversation. Mr. Mike Kaszyski said the officer registers on the report what the driver admitted to.

Ms. Dunigan said this was presented to WILMAPCO's Nonmotorized Working Group, who had many questions about the cause of the pedestrian crashes as the cause listed is often "pedestrian". Only 2% of commutes outside the home are bicycle or pedestrian, but they are 35% of the crashes. Recommendations are being grouped into three categories. Policy and process includes recommendations for systematic changes. Supplemental planning includes more planning in the traditional sense, demonstration projects, and pilot projects. Implementation includes the final programs and infrastructure changes. There is a lot of information available about proven techniques to reduce different types of crashes.

Mr. Richard Janney suggested that a driver safety course could be part of renewing your driver's license. Mr. Kaszyski said at least have something to show a basic understanding of the laws as laws progress over the years. Ms. Dunigan agreed improved licensing is a tool. Mr. Kaszyski asked if there has been consideration of community service for offenders. Ms. Dunigan said community service could be an effective tool. It is an equity issue. Paying a fine is challenging for people. Instead of relying on enforcement we want roads designed in such a way that people will do the right thing. Enforcement may be a stop-gap measure until infrastructure is improved and other measures are implemented.

Mr. Dunn said it would be nice to have a subset of the data that is in or in close proximity to the proposed TID in the Churchman's Crossing area and on Concord Pike. Some people have limited interest in bike improvements or sidewalks. This justifies the effort and recognizes the cost on the front end. Ms. Dunigan said our monitoring committees look at the traffic as part of their analysis. Once the high-crash network is approved, that will become a standard part of all of the monitoring analyses. Mr. Dunn said they do not meet until October to review recommendations for Churchman's Crossing. Having that for the discussion would be beneficial. Mr. Dave Gula said the City of Wilmington will be doing a Safe Streets for All study that builds off of a city-wide pedestrian safety program designed by DeIDOT. This data can be compared to theirs to see if it matches.

6. TJ Bus Connectivity Analysis

Mr. Bill Swiatek said this update to the Transportation Justice Bus Connectivity Analysis was begun two years ago, after the 2019 TJ Plan found some impoverished neighborhoods and Black neighborhoods across the region had poor connectivity to entry level job centers. Food deserts with poor transit connectivity to supermarkets were also found. This analysis looks more closely at those areas identified in that plan to see what changes could be made at a high level to make some of those connections. This study looks at places that had a below median wage and also sites with many jobs, like the Christiana Mall and hospitals across the region. Jobs found in those clusters include residential, retail, childcare, and senior services. Each job center site represents between 130 and 11,000 jobs. Good connectivity is defined as a ten-minute accessible walking trip, a ten-minute low level of traffic stress bike ride, a fifteen-minute car trip, or a thirty-minute bus trip with transfers allowed, which were not allowed in the 2019 study. The bus trip also includes no more than ten minutes of walking on a low stress route. The team looked at improvements that could be made in the pedestrian and/or bus system to increase connections for the greatest percentage of households in each area. The team focused on non-complex adjustments that have the greatest positive impact.

The team started by updating the 2019 analysis then identified the disadvantaged neighborhoods within those block groups that have a connectivity issue. We went below the block group level, because most of an individual block group may have good bus connectivity but exceptions are found further away from the bus line. If all the connectivity recommendations were made, cumulatively food deserts would have 1,500 new households with good connectivity to supermarkets by bus, which takes them from 39% connected to 83%. In Black and impoverished neighborhoods, over 3,000 new households would have improved connections to entry level job clusters, going from 0 to 500 today to over 5,000+ jobs. In Murray Manor, for example, which is just off Kirkwood Highway, residents at the back of the community do not meet the good connectivity threshold. A periodic deviation of the Route 6 bus or micro transit bringing service closer to the community entrance would bring the connected households from 5% to 93%. A food desert in Northeast Wilmington would see connectivity to the south Wilmington ShopRite improve from 14% to 64% with a deviation in of the Route 25 bus. That

would improve conditions for 271 households. The next step in this work will include balancing the impact on existing riders with this improved connectivity. In Cecil County, pedestrian improvements US 40 would improve connectivity for twenty units at Steele's Motel, which is a long stay motel. On US 40 in Delaware, adding pedestrian connections between two neighborhoods would provide one neighborhood connection to the bus that loops through the other. There is a tree line that separates the eastern part of that community with a bus stop on US 40. Adding a pedestrian connection through the trees improves connection for about 600 households.

The Transportation Justice Working Group approved the study. It will be brought to Council for endorsement in July. PAC is invited to look at the draft report on the website and share thoughts about improvements or ways to reduce jargon.

Mr. Carlos de los Ramos asked if anyone is representing WILMAPCO on the DART Reimagined. Ms. Cathy Smith said DART Reimagined is a comprehensive transit study that is looking at how DART's services can be tweaked and how the service network design can better meet the needs of statewide transit commuters and vulnerable populations. She recommends members visit www.dartreimagined.com. Surveys are out until June 15th however the project email website can be used to give comments and suggestions. Summer outreach is just beginning. DART will be at community events and was in Southbridge at a park meeting. There will be a community workshop in each county and in Wilmington in September. The website has a State of the System report and a performance metric that talks about transit services statewide, the market, the service area gaps, and where adjustments are needed.

Ms. Patricia Folk asked for specifics about what is being proposed for the area around the Steele Motel on Route 40. Mr. Swiatek said they are looking for a way to make it safer for people to access the bus stops there and across the street. Ms. Folk asked what bus stops there, as she has not seen one and she lives nearby. Mr. Swiatek said it is the Cecil Transit bus. Ms. Folk asked if they are working with transportation officials in the county on stopping traffic on Route 40. Mr. Swiatek said MDOT is part of the TAC, and they are invited to be part of our Steering Committee for this study. The focus is on how people staying in that motel can use the bus safely. Right now, it is not a good connection for bus riders. There are a number of solutions, but this flags the issue there. Ms. Folk said she does not know how many people are trying to cross there. There is major industry there and a lot of traffic in the area. Maybe that is not a good place for the bus stop. Mr. Swiatek said it was identified as a food desert with poor transit connectivity and suggested they discuss this further offline.

7. Ardens Transportation Plan Update

Mr. Bill Swiatek said the Ardens are located north of Wilmington. There are three villages and some unincorporated land that belongs to New Castle County within the Ardens. The plan goals with this study are to manage vehicle travel speeds and deploy safety countermeasures, provide enhanced pedestrian crossings, improve the bus and pedestrian network, and enhance transit and school bus stops. The Steering Committee included local officials, New Castle County, the Claymont Fire Station, DART, and DeIDOT. The process began with setting a vision, then developing some concepts for improvements, coming up with preferred alternatives, and looking at prioritization and implementation. The community is reviewing this plan and considering it for endorsement.

The public process began with a Walkable Community Workshop. There were three well-attended public workshops. The two community surveys had a response rate between eight and

thirteen percent. There was a parallel process with the youth including a youth workshop and survey. The key issue is speeding. Sixty-seven percent of survey respondents are extremely concerned with speeding on Harvey Road, forty-eight percent on Veale Road, and twenty-seven percent on Marsh Road. The data on speeds correlates with those responses. When asked to suggest amenities on Harvey Road, people responded with pedestrian crossings, bike amenities, and art. The current bus Route 11 runs between Wilmington and the Ardens, but people want more east-west connectivity. Forty-three percent want transit to connect to Concord Pike and seventy-five percent want transit to the Claymont Train Station. The survey was used to select preferred alternatives. The team gave people two options for a bike and pedestrian network. One option runs parallel to Harvey Road and builds off the existing networks. The other puts sidewalks on Harvey Road. Building the off of the existing networks was preferred. Preferred methods of traffic calming on Harvey Road favored gateway treatments, and signal improvements over roundabouts or mini roundabouts. On Harvey Road, starting at Marsh Road improvements include gateway intersection treatments and maintaining that tightening of the road throughout the Ardens with things like bioswales, intersection treatments, and median treatments. To reduce traffic speeds approaching the Ardens, it is recommended that the part of the road that passes over I-95 be taken down to one lane instead of two. That would need to be modeled. On Veale Road, some preferred alternatives include reducing the speed limit from 35 to 25 and then traffic calming through a combination of crossings and median treatments. The cost of all of this would be in the range of \$9-16 million. There was coordination with the Claymont Fire Company, who prefer to travel through the Ardens as quickly as possible. They are interested in having traffic signal pre-emption equipment on their fire trucks to allow them to get all green lights as they travel on Harvey Road, which should help their response time, even with the traffic calming measures installed. This is estimated to cost about \$50,000. Multimodal recommendations focus on building out the existing network of trails on either side of Harvey Road and focusing on pedestrian crossings at key spots selected by the community. Bus recommendations include three priority locations for bus stops with wooden bus stops, which would be locally developed and maintained. We also are looking at a feasibility study to review walking access to the Route 61 bus that operates on Naaman's Road and connects to the Concord Pike and the Claymont Train Station. Micro transit is also a potential solution for east-west connections, but it requires more study.

The community is reviewing the draft recommendations. The final public workshop was held. The three villages will meet jointly on June 26th to vote on the study. All the residents of the Ardens will vote. Each village will go to separate spaces and vote on the study. The plan will be in front of the TAC on June 15th and the Council on July 13th. After a Monitoring Committee will be established to guide this project to implementation.

8. Other Business

None.

9. Adjournment

The PAC adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Attachments: (0)