

PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WILMAPCO Hybrid-format Meeting, October 16, 2023

Minutes prepared by Elizabeth Espinal.

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

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Tracy Chamblee, Southern New Castle County Alliance
Carlos de los Ramos, AARP
Bill Dunn, Civic League for New Castle County
Mike Kaszyski, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and PAC Chair
William Lower, Committee of 100
Barry Shotwell, 7/40 Alliance
Dave Tancredi, Milltown-Limestone Civic Alliance

Absent:

Serene Abiy, University of Delaware
Mark Blake, GHADA
Patricia Folk, Cecil County
Richard Janney, Southern New Castle County
Deanna Murphy, Cecil County Board of Realtors
Glenn Pusey, Bear Glasgow Council
Anna Quisel, League of Women Voters of New Castle County
Vic Singer, Civic League for New Castle County
Joshua Solge, City of Newark

Staff Members:

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

Guests: None

2. Approval of the June 12, 2023, and August 14, 2023, Meeting Minutes.

ACTION: Approval of the PAC Meeting Minutes was held via email vote as there was not a quorum of PAC members.

3. Public Comment Period:

None.

4. Executive Director's Report:

Ms. Tigist Zegeye shared the following public outreach information:

- The Council met September 14th and had several action items. They approved to amend the FY2024 UPWP to include carryover funds, they approved a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment to include the New Castle County Mid-County Driver Training Facility. The Council also approved use of federal funds for FY 2024. The Council endorsed the Southbridge Transportation Action Plan, and the New Castle County Safe Streets for All Action Plan. The Council also approved the PAC members' reappointments. Three presentations were held including a review of the DRBA Capital Program, DeIDOT Equity Analysis, and North Claymont Area Master Plan/Governor Printz Blvd Study Monitoring presentation.
- Staff, in collaboration with DeIDOT, hosted the Joint TIP and CTP public meeting at Newark free library on August 30th.
- On August 31st staff discussed the Transportation Justice Connectivity Analysis at APA Delaware Chapter, during their monthly lunch & Learn meeting.
- Staff have participated in the FRA Long-Distance Study, Northeast Working Group as part of the Philadelphia region.
- Staff continue to participate in AMPO data interest groups and have been presenting on performance management.
- Staff participated in the Delaware East Coast Greenway update.
- Staff selected Wallace Montgomery as consultants for the East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan.
- Staff has selected Kittleson and Associates to lead the South Claymont/ Philadelphia Pike Corridor Master Plan.
- Staff selected RK&K as consultants for the Kirkwood Highway Lane Use and Transportation Plan.
- Staff selected Hurley Franks and Associates to develop the Rising Sun Mobility Guidelines.
- Staff in collaboration with the City of Newark and Bike Newark, presented the Newark Bike Plan Update to the Planning Commission on September 5th.
- On September 17th staff participated in the Newark Community Day as part of an outreach event.
- Staff presented the Newark Bike Plan Update to the Conservation Committee on October 10th and will present it to the City Council on October 23rd.
- Staff continue to coordinate with DVRPC, the Philadelphia MPO, on climate pollution reduction grants, for the Philadelphia region, which includes WILMAPCO.
- Staff met with researchers at Rowan University to discuss best practices in transportation equity measurements.
- On October 4th Staff participated in Walk to School Day at Downes Elementary School.
- Staff participated in the Cecil County MDOT Pre Tour meeting on September 20th and will also attend the MDOT Tour Meeting scheduled for October 31st.
- WILMAPCO applied for the Neighborhood Access and Equity Funding Program for reducing truck traffic in the Southbridge Neighborhood; this is a recommendation of the STAP.
- WILMAPCO assisted DeIDOT and their consultants on an application for Reconnecting Community and Neighborhoods Program Funding for the I-95 CAP.
- On October 21st, staff will participate in the Women's Transportation Seminar, a youth event aimed at educating children on urban planning principles.

No questions were asked.

ACTION ITEMS:

None

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

5. WILMAPCO Transportation Planning Public Guide.

Ms. Dawn Voss presented the transportation planning guide as an updated version of the previous guide. Ms. Voss added that the recommended updating cycle is approximately every three years. Due to the impact of COVID, there was a delay in the update process.

The guide serves educational and promotional purposes, particularly for those unfamiliar with transportation planning. It is presented as a hard copy used in workshops and outreach events to educate people about transportation, WILMAPCO's role, and how to get involved. The updated version includes changes in appearance, updated photographs, additional colors, and improved graphics. Notably, four major changes were made, including a reformatting to highlight information on how to engage in transportation planning that was moved towards the forefront of the booklet.

Ms. Voss provided an overview of the guide's contents, which includes an introduction to WILMAPCO, an explanation of how the public can participate in transportation planning, and the importance of involvement. Ms. Voss briefly explained updates made to social media information and discussed regional transportation planning basics, goals, performance measures, and the process of turning ideas into transportation projects. Ms. Voss presented the regional successes and challenges, followed by updated demographic information.

At end of the guide, there is information on how to find more details about transportation planning, a glossary, and contact information for local and regional agencies, including WILMAPCO. The booklet concludes with a call to action for involvement.

Lastly, Ms. Voss invites the PAC members to review the guide for clarity and to ensure public understanding. The goal is to submit the guide to the printer by Thursday of the current week after feedback is received. Ms. Voss then asked if there were any questions about the book's purpose.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski raised a question about the booklet's distribution at outreach events. Dawn clarified that the booklets are for public consumption, introducing WILMAPCO and providing information on transportation planning. She explained that the hard copies are printed for public use, not necessarily for distribution to those already familiar with the industry.

Mr. Kaszyski added that the booklet is intended to offer more in-depth information than a typical brochure, allowing individuals to take it home, browse it, and find information about transportation planning.

Mr. Carlos de los Ramos inquired about translations into other languages, and Ms. Voss noted it as a good suggestion for future consideration. It is not printed in any other language other than English.

Mr. Kaszyski asked if this document was also posted as a PDF on the website. Dawn confirmed that it is part of the package on the PAC page of the website, along with the meeting agenda and minutes. Mr. Kaszyski expressed curiosity about the public's access to such information on the website. In response, Ms. Voss mentioned that while this specific file might not be directly on the website, it could be arranged to be posted independently.

6. WILMAPCO UPWP Studies for FY2024

Mr. Bill Swiatek began this series of presentations with the East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan. He mentioned that the study is in its early stages. Two UPWP requests were received: from Cecil County and the Town of Elkton, focusing on specific corridors -- Belle Hill Road, Muddy Lane, and the Delancy Road Corridor. To enhance efficiency and avoid confusion, both requests were combined into a single study. The consulting group selected, Wallace Montgomery, is actively involved. A diverse Steering Committee, including local town and transportation perspectives, has been established.

The plan's goals encompass understanding and documenting existing traffic movements, exploring potential roadway realignments, resolving land use conflicts near the MD 279 interchange, addressing road safety improvements, and enhancing walking and cycling connectivity. The planning process involves examining existing conditions, visioning through surveys and workshops, proposing recommendations, and concluding with a selection of recommendations.

Community engagement efforts include online surveys, hard copies in key locations, youth engagement strategies, and addressing social equity concerns through direct mailings to Transportation Justice areas. Public workshops will feature a walkthrough presentation and online accessibility. Key stakeholder engagement with businesses, truck dealerships, and hotels along the MD 279 corridor is also planned.

Mr. Swiatek shared illustrative data from the existing conditions report, showcasing zoning in the Belle Hill Road area, traffic composition at intersections, crash data, development plans for the corridor, potential road realignments, and the bike level of stress. A public workshop is scheduled for October 26th.

Mr. Bill Lower posed a question for the team, expressing gratitude for the upcoming study in East Elkton. He shared his knowledge of the Elkton West Annexation area, highlighting the history of annexation along Belle Hill Road and the challenges presented by increasing truck traffic. He inquired about options under consideration, specifically questioning the possibility of widening Belle Hill Road and exploring different traffic flow scenarios. Additionally, he asked if the Elkton West District had expanded since his involvement a decade ago.

Mr. Bill Swiatek said that all options are currently on the table for examination, emphasizing the early stage of this study. He mentioned the absence of limits on considerations and the intention to involve the public in solutions. The consultants will assess alternatives both technically and based on resident feedback. Mr. Swiatek expressed his opinion on the need for a closer examination of land use in the corridor to prevent future conflicts, a task assigned to Wallace Montgomery. Regarding the expansion of the Elkton West District, he noted that he lacked current information but offered to investigate the changes from a decade ago. Mr. Lower praised the team's capabilities and expressed satisfaction with the focus on the dangerous intersection. Lastly, he recommended that, while working with consultants, the team should examine the areas where water and sewer infrastructure has expanded to plan for future traffic flow and management, considering it a key factor driving development.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski highlighted the industrial development on Belle Hill Road in Maryland, mentioning that in Delaware, DelDOT often requests property developers to improve road sections to current standards. He questioned whether similar actions were being taken in

Maryland and if there were collaborative efforts between the city, town, and county. He also noted the challenging angle at the intersection of Belle Hill Road and Delancy Road and reference Appleton Road, expressing concern about truck traffic.

In response, Mr. Bill Swiatek acknowledged the tight sections on Delancy Road and emphasized the need for safer infrastructure based on survey feedback, particularly for pedestrians. He discussed exploring potential connections between neighborhoods to enhance transportation options. Mr. Kaszyski added that there seemed to be potential for community connections in the vicinity.

Bill Dunn inquired about road improvements in Cecil County's major development plans, specifically regarding road improvements and increased traffic. Mike Kaszyski explained that Maryland State law typically requires adequate public facilities codes, including traffic studies for neighborhoods exceeding certain trip thresholds. The discussion concluded with considerations about the scope of such studies and the requirements for identified issues and improvements.

Ms. Heather Dunigan presented three upcoming UPWP projects during this session. The first project involves the South Claymont Master Plan, situated in the heart of Claymont. This area is a focus for analysis due to existing commercial spaces, older and newer residential areas, and the proximity to previous studies. New Castle County requested this project, and collaboration includes Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation, DeIDOT, DART, and a steering committee with various local stakeholders. The analysis of existing conditions is near completion, covering transportation, land use, environmental constraints, historic resources, and factors like environmental justice considerations.

The second project is the Rising Sun Mobility Friendly Design Guidelines, requested by the town of Rising Sun, with collaboration from Cecil County. The team of consultants' features, Hurley Franks & Associates and Susan Henderson, they will assess development opportunities on the edges of the municipality and potential annexation areas, ensuring that the code aligns with existing land uses and community character.

The third project is the Newark Bicycle Plan update to the 2014 document. The new update will incorporate developments since 2014, focus on equity, incorporate Vision Zero and safety measures, and integrate sustainability practices. Ms. Dunigan emphasized the city's proactive approach to plan implementation.

Mr. Dave Gula presented the Kirkwood Highway Corridor Master Plan, emphasizing its collaboration with partners from DeIDOT, New Castle County, and DART. The corridor, known for its retail centers and concerns about speed and crashes, aims to be more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly corridor. Mr. Gula mentioned the effectiveness of DART Rt 6 bus as one of the most prominent routes statewide.

The study area spans from the Newark Transportation Improvement District (TID) to the west, reaching the eastern edge of the city of Wilmington. The decision to exclude Newark from the study is due to the ongoing TID plan. Wilmington has expressed interest in a parallel study from the city boundary to Lincoln Street, and collaboration with Wilmington Initiatives is being explored.

Mr. Gula introduced the selected consulting team, RK&K, in partnership with Kramer Associates Renaissance Planning and Qua Marketing. Mr. Gula emphasized that this project is substantial, with a projected duration of 18 months. In collaboration with these teams, Mr. Gula shared data

analysis gathered throughout the study, which involves a comprehensive approach, including traffic volume analysis and identification of crash hot spots. With Qua Marketing, there is a plan to reach diverse communities, breaking through language barriers and enhancing engagement with the community through workshops, surveys, and public outreach. Furthermore, he shared the breakdown of each task throughout this extensive project.

- Task 1 focuses on identifying issues, opportunities, and constraints, including a market analysis by 4ward Planning to understand potential growth areas.
- Task 2 involves community visioning, where input from the Advisory Committee and the public is crucial for successful outcomes.
- Task 3 aims to define public priorities and explore potential land use and transportation scenarios.
- Task 4 involves testing and modeling different alternatives along the corridor, considering varying traffic volumes and safety concerns.
- Task 5 includes presenting the best-fit model to the public based on community feedback, ensuring a collaborative and consensus-driven approach throughout the study.

Mr. Gula concluded the presentation by reiterating continuous public engagement and outreach efforts. He mentioned that the website will be available on October 30th and the first visioning workshop is tentative for early December.

Mr. Carlos de los Ramos is interested in how the study partners will reach out to the Hispanic community along Kirkwood Hwy. Mr. Bill Dunn is concerned about how this study will interact with the Churchman's Crossing Plan Update and TID. He also volunteered to assist with civic contacts, if needed. Mr. Gula agreed to follow up with them on these concerns.

6. Southbridge Transportation Action Plan Update

Mr. Bill Swiatek presented the final review of the Southbridge Transportation Action Plan. The plan encompassed South Wilmington, focusing on the Southbridge community and adjacent areas. It was built upon previous projects like the South Neighborhood Action Plan (SNAP), Southbridge Circulation Study, Truck Parking Study, Port of Wilmington Traffic Circulation Study, and Route 9 Master Plan.

Mr. Swiatek mentioned the collaboration with various stakeholders, including DART, City of Wilmington, DeIDOT, South Wilmington Planning Network, Southbridge Civic Association, and Southbridge CDC. The study involved community ambassadors, representatives from the Southbridge Civic Association, and the hiring of a local resident skilled in door-to-door surveying, ensuring a localized and inclusive approach.

Mr. Bill Swiatek explained that the engagement process included surveys, workshops, focus groups, and meetings with the Southbridge Planning Network. The initial focus involved confirming the vision and needs of the community. The selection of alternatives involved a detailed survey and outdoor events, along with assembling substantial community participation.

Key priorities identified in the plan included signage and striping recommendations, upgrades for truck-related issues, speed limit signs, signal time revisions, and the need for additional lighting. The study also recommended the reconfiguration of New Castle Avenue and C and D Streets, along with incorporating road diets and raised intersections on New Castle Avenue and Heald Street.

Public feedback was crucial in shaping the recommendations, with surveys indicating strong community support for various proposed changes. The study also revealed transportation-related inequities in the community, emphasizing the need for improved access to healthy and affordable grocery shopping and job opportunities. The bus connectivity analysis highlighted the community's request for additional services. Improved route frequency and route deviations are example recommendations to expand accessibility. Mr. Swiatek discussed a grant application submitted to US DOT, to study a potential truck bypass to reduce truck volume through Southbridge, a key community concern.

Lastly, Mr. Swiatek mentioned the availability of the project website (www.wilmapco.org/southbridge) for access to the full report and additional details about the Southbridge Transportation Action Plan.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Adjournment

The PAC adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Attachments: (0)