

PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WILMAPCO Hybrid-format Meeting, February 12, 2024

Minutes prepared by Elizabeth Espinal.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski, PAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present: 10

Carlos de los Ramos, AARP
Patricia Folk, Cecil County
Jacob Higgins representing Josh Solge, City of Newark
Richard Janney, Southern New Castle County
Mike Kaszyski, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and PAC Chair
Bill Lower, Committee of 100
Deanna Murphy, Cecil County Board of Realtors
Anna Quisel, League of Women Voters of New Castle County
Dave Tancredi, Milltown-Limestone Civic Alliance
Tracy Chamblee, Southern New Castle County Alliance

Absent: 6

Serene Abiy, University of Delaware
Mark Blake, GHADA
Bill Dunn, Civic League for New Castle County
Glenn Pusey, Bear Glasgow Council
Barry Shotwell, 7/40 Alliance
Vic Singer, Civic League for New Castle County

Staff Members:

Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner
Jacob Thompson, Principal Planner
Dawn Voss, Outreach Coordinator

Guests:

Aviva Klugh, Maryland Department of Transportation

2. Approval of the December 18, 2023 Meeting Minutes

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Richard Janney seconded by Mr. Dave Tancredi the PAC approved the October 16, 2023, PAC Meeting Minutes.

3. Public Comment Period:

None.

4. Executive Director's Report:

Ms. Heather Dunigan shared the following public outreach information:

- On January 4th Concord Pike Monitoring Committee met, the next meeting is scheduled for March 7th.
- Council met January 11th and had no action items. They viewed four presentations including East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan, Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan, Newark Bicycle Plan Update, and 2024 Draft Inter-Regional Report.
- On January 18th the East Elkton Steering Committee met with partners.
- On January 18th the Route 9 Monitoring Committee met, the next meeting is scheduled for March 21st.
- On January 22nd the Rising Sun Mobility Friendly Design had their first Kick-off meeting with town officials to discuss the project scope.
- On January 23rd Claymont Area Master Plan had a committee meeting.
- On January 26th, Kirkwood Highway Corridor Study Briefing with elected officials.
- On January 29th Kirkwood Highway Transportation and Land Use met with the Advisory Committee.
- On January 22nd the Rising Sun Mobility Friendly Design Project had a kickoff meeting with the town officials. The plan for the project was slightly adjusted, rather than focusing on the newly developed areas, the new proposal is to focus on the existing center and store areas of the town.
- On February 2nd the Ardens Monitoring Committee met and the next meeting is on March 5th.
- On February 6th staff met with DelDOT to discuss the 12th Street Connector and the Brandywine Flood Study.
- On February 13th East Elkton Monitoring Committee will meet and the next public workshop is scheduled for March 27th at Elkton Free Library.
- On February 21st the Kirkwood Highway and Transportation Land Use Committee will have a scenario workshop at the Cranston Heights Fire Hall.
- On February 22nd staff will participate of DelDOT's Council on Transportation Meeting to further discuss the FY 2025-2028 TIP.
- On February 22nd staff will attend the Downes Elementary School Family Night event to promote safety in transportation.
- From February 26th-March 1st, staff will be instructing children on a safety station at Downes Elementary.
- On February 28th Churchman's Crossing Monitoring Committee will meet, a website is available for this project and Concord Pike Corridor respectively.
- On February 29th the Claymont Area Master Plan will have a public visioning workshop at Archmere Academy from 6:30pm-8:30pm
- On April 17th staff are scheduled to present at the Delaware Safety Summit.
- On the Newport Train Station update staff assisted DelDOT and DTC on developing the RFP.
- Staff continue to work on the FRA FY2024 grant for the Diamond State line initiative and the scope of studies for rail passengers.
- Staff continues to coordinate with DVRPC on the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program.

ACTION ITEMS:

None

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

5. MDOT Maryland State Report on Transportation

Ms. Aviva Klugh shared a brief introduction and began her presentation with the 2024 State Report update on the Maryland Transportation Plan. The goal of this update is to highlight key projects and programs that emphasize multimodal and collaborative priorities across the state. She referred to the report as the SRT (State Report on Transportation), which is a required annual submission to the Maryland General Assembly. This state report comprises three major components: the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP), the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), and the annual Attainment Report (AR) on Transportation System Performance. These reports collectively illustrate the MTP as the plan, the CTP as the investment strategy, and the AR as the evaluation process used to assess progress towards the goals outlined in the MTP.

Ms. Klugh explained the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) outlines the state's transportation policies and priorities. It serves as a guide for statewide investment decisions across all transportation modes and is updated every 4-5 years through a public participation process to address current and future challenges. The MTP establishes a 20+ year vision for multi-modal transportation in Maryland, aiming to create a system that facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services. This vision is achieved through innovative, equitable, and sustainable practices. Containing over 75 strategies, the MTP guides and aligns MDOT modal plans, projects, and programs. These strategies identify significant projects and programs, ranging from large-scale infrastructure initiatives to statewide programs like Complete Streets and pedestrian safety.

Ms. Klugh added that the strategic planning process extends to accountability and implementation, ensuring that the strategies outlined in the MTP are effectively executed. Ms. Klugh elaborated on how Maryland's transportation system is funded, highlighting several dedicated taxes and fees, federal aid, operating revenues, and bond sales that contribute to the Transportation Trust Fund. This fund, distinct from the State's General Fund, supports transportation initiatives. Funding sources for the transportation system include user fees such as motor fuel taxes, vehicle titling taxes, and registration fees, along with operating revenues from transit fares and usage fees at various transportation hubs. Additionally, MDOT utilizes capital funding from State General Obligation bonds, federal aid, local contributions, and airport revenue bonds, among others.

MDOT actively seeks to maximize financial resources by exploring alternative sources like issuing GARVEE bonds, applying for federal grants, and engaging in public-private partnerships. Over a six-year period, MDOT's operating and capital spending from various sources totals \$41.3 billion. Funds from the Trust Fund support various transportation needs including operation and maintenance, administration, debt service, and capital projects. Additionally, local capital transportation grants are provided to Maryland counties and Baltimore City. After accounting for operating costs, debt service, and grants, the remaining funds are allocated to capital projects.

Moving to the CTP (Consolidated Transportation Program) for 2024-2029, this document reflects the budget allocation for transportation projects and programs. It's funded through various dedicated taxes and fees, allocated to the Transportation Trust Fund. Despite funding constraints, the CTP remains committed to safety projects, infrastructure maintenance, and priority initiatives aligned with our administration's goals.

The 2024 Annual Report provides an overview of Maryland's transportation system performance, investment, mobility, and accessibility. This report is crucial for benchmarking progress and informing future planning efforts. MDOT has updated over 50 performance measures, reflecting our focus on future-oriented initiatives such as EV adoption and equity-focused investments. Additionally, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan emphasizes active transportation and equitable access for all Marylanders.

As they transition from planning to implementation, stakeholder engagement becomes paramount. MDOT encourages feedback and collaboration from MPOs, constituents, and transportation users to ensure that our initiatives meet the needs of the region. Ms. Klugh emphasized the strategic planning efforts are geared towards promoting safety, equity, and sustainability in Maryland's transportation system. MDOT welcomes your feedback and collaboration as we work towards a more inclusive and effective transportation network. Lastly, Ms. Klugh concluded by inviting inquiries or feedback, be sent directly to her at aklugh@mdot.maryland.gov or Michelle Martin, the Deputy Director at mmartin@mdot.Maryland.gov.

Mr. Carlos de los Ramos asked if she could share the presentation, and Ms. Klugh will add it to the chat.

Mr. Dave Gula added a comment thanking Ms. Aviva the presentation, and for the additional efforts made to foster collaboration. We appreciate your presence and look forward to exploring opportunities for partnership beyond our usual tasks.

Ms. Heather Dunigan shared a comment on the coordination efforts for Cecil County participants present during the meeting. She mentioned there are several grants upcoming in the state of Maryland, and while the workshop dates aren't close to Cecil County, WILMAPCO has been doing a great job this year ensuring they're synchronized. If you have any questions about them, feel free to reach out. Ms. Aviva Klugh responded, there are indeed many grants available, and any assistance with letters of support has been greatly appreciated. We rely on the on-the-ground information provided by you all.

Ms. Anna Quisel from the League of Women Voters of Delaware asked Ms. Klugh about the development of policies aimed at reducing vehicle miles traveled, as mentioned in the transportation goals. Ms. Aviva Klugh affirmed that it is addressed in the Maryland Transportation Plan and the Annual Report. She remembered to share the report link on the chat box.

6. 2024 Draft Inter-Regional Report

In the presentation, Mr. Jake Thompson addressed the attendees, introducing the draft 2024 update to the interregional report. He began by outlining the key aspects of the report, focusing on demographic changes and travel characteristics within the 28-county study area. Mr. Thompson emphasized the importance of understanding the transportation system, referencing data collected from various sources including the US Census Bureau, FHWA, MPO's, State Departments of Transportation, county planning departments, and transit authorities.

Looking ahead to 2050, Mr. Thompson highlighted projections indicating a population increase from 11.5 to 12.6 million people, representing a 10% growth. Notably, Salem County, New Jersey, is expected to be the largest contributor to this growth, with Philadelphia and Baltimore

City also experiencing significant increases. Employment is forecasted to rise from 5.9 to 6.5 million jobs, with Philadelphia playing a significant role in job creation.

Regarding transportation trends, Mr. Thompson discussed shifts in urban areas, noting changes in categorization from the 2010 to 2020 census. Despite a slight decrease in the percentage of urban areas within the study, Mr. Thompson clarified that this adjustment does not reflect a change in definitions but rather aids in future comparisons.

Examining traffic patterns, Mr. Thompson highlighted current and projected increases in vehicle usage, particularly along major roadways such as I-95. Factors contributing to this growth include population and employment increases, although the rise in remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic has tempered traffic growth to some extent. Truck traffic was also a significant focus, with projections indicating a substantial increase by 2045. Mr. Thompson identified key truck routes and highlighted the importance of managing freight movements effectively to alleviate congestion and support economic growth.

In terms of equity considerations, Mr. Thompson discussed changes in commuting behaviors, including a decline in solo driving and an increase in remote work. He emphasized the need to address disparities in transportation access, particularly for low-income and minority populations.

Mr. Thompson concluded the presentation with recommendations for future transportation planning, including expanding intercounty transit services, promoting interagency coordination, and encouraging walkable land uses to mitigate congestion and support sustainable growth. Throughout the presentation, Mr. Thompson provided detailed insights into demographic shifts, traffic patterns, and equity considerations, laying the groundwork for informed decision-making in regional transportation planning.

Lastly, Mr. Thompson encouraged everyone to view the report on the website at www.wilmapco.org/interregional/ and he opened the floor for questions.

Mr. Dave Tancredi sought clarification on the projected 15% increase in population by 2050, specifically in New Castle County, and its implications for job growth. He questioned whether this increase might lead to more commuters traveling to Philadelphia or Baltimore for work, particularly given the projected 14% increase in jobs.

In response, Mr. Mike Kaszyski and Mr. Dave Gula contributed to the discussion, acknowledging the population shift towards areas like Sussex County. Several members speculated on the reasons behind the negative job growth projection in New Castle County, suggesting a potential trend towards an aging population. Additionally, Mr. Gula highlighted ongoing conversations with Mr. Dan Blevins regarding population data updates and the possibility of further discussions at future meetings.

The conversation shifted towards transportation-related concerns, with Mr. Mike Kaszyski expressing curiosity about the implications of population growth on commuting patterns to major centers like Philadelphia and Baltimore. He also noted the surprising growth in Chester County and speculated on potential factors driving this trend.

Further questions were posed by Ms. Patricia Folk, who inquired about the expected job losses in New Castle and Carroll counties and sought clarification on the term "rabbit transit." Mr. Thompson provided insights, explaining the role of Rabbit Transit as the local transit agency for York County,

Pennsylvania, and highlighting the purpose of the report in presenting large-scale trends rather than delving into specific causes.

The discussion concluded with reassurances from Mr. Dave Gula that the questions raised would be addressed in future meetings or through further analysis of trend information. Overall, the discussion demonstrated a keen interest in understanding the implications of demographic and transportation changes within the region.

7. Regional Priority Climate Action Plan

Mr. Bill Swiatek began the presentation by discussing the collaborative efforts between WILMAPCO and DVRPC (Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission) on the first of two Philadelphia metropolitan region climate action plans requested by the EPA. He highlighted the involvement of various governmental agencies across multiple states, emphasizing the broad scope of the initiative. The focus of the plan is on reducing climate pollution, with the main components being a priority climate action plan and a comprehensive climate action plan. Mr. Swiatek explained that implementation funding accompanies these plans, providing financial support for initiatives identified within them. He noted the competitive nature of the grants, ranging from \$2 million to half a billion dollars.

To facilitate the planning process, a steering committee was formed comprising representatives from government agencies and utility companies. Mr. Swiatek outlined the elements required in the priority climate action plan, including public engagement, greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories, benefits analysis for low-income and disadvantaged communities (LIDAC), and funding analysis.

Mr. Swiatek described the methodology used to prioritize actions, which involved consolidating existing climate plans, scoring measures based on criteria such as implementation ability and benefit to LIDAC communities, and engaging stakeholders.

Mr. Swiatek provided examples of priority measures, such as decarbonizing local government operations and implementing clean energy and energy efficiency programs. He emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement, despite time constraints, and outlined the timeline for plan submission.

Lastly, Mr. Bill Swiatek encouraged attendees to stay informed about the priority climate action plan and the development of an upcoming more comprehensive climate action plan through the DVRPC website at www.dvrpc.org/cprg.

Mr. Richard Janney inquired about the sources of greenhouse gases. Mr. Swiatek elaborated on the focus of their work, explaining that they primarily examined adjustments to the human activities that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. He emphasized that these activities, such as driving fossil-fuel based cars, are significant contributors to emissions.

Ms. Anna Quisel then inquired about the individuals responsible for carrying out daily activities related to the discussed measures, focusing on their personality traits. In response, Mr. Swiatek noted that the measures developed are considered low-hanging fruit, encompassing actions aligned with EPA objectives, such as showing quick GHG reductions by 2030, and capable of prompt execution by relevant groups. He emphasized the selection of measures based on their potential to address various societal needs and the ability of existing groups to implement them efficiently.

Mr. Richard Janney referred to jet travel, mentioning Taylor Swift's practice of planting trees to offset carbon emissions. Ms. Heather Dunigan expressed agreement with this idea, highlighting its potential positive impact on environmental conservation. Subsequently, Mr. Bill Swiatek acknowledged the significance of tree planting and noted it was especially in alignment with Maryland's environmental initiatives.

Ms. Anna Quisel raised the topic of walkable communities, expressing the desire for urban areas where residents can easily access their destinations on foot. Mr. Mike Kaszyski inquired about alternative fuel options such as natural gas and hydrogen hubs for vehicles. Mr. Swiatek acknowledged the relevance of these options, particularly for land use adjustments and medium and heavy-duty vehicles, but said that they weren't included in the current plan due to prioritization and the need to consider ready-to-go measures that would yield significant short-term carbon reductions. However, he assured the PAC that these and others would be considered in the upcoming Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.

Mr. Dave Tancredi then raised a question regarding the transition to new charging standards for electric vehicles (EVs). He suggested exploring grant opportunities to convert existing chargers to the new standard and emphasized the need for broader planning to accommodate future changes in EV technology and infrastructure. Mr. Swiatek commended the suggestion and emphasized the importance of considering long-term implications and community needs in EV infrastructure planning. This project was, however, focused on need to consider ready-to-go measures that would yield significant short-term carbon reductions.

The discussion expanded to include considerations of utility infrastructure, EV charging speed, and the availability of charging stations in various communities. Participants highlighted the importance of addressing charging infrastructure disparities and ensuring accessibility for all members of the community. Mr. Tancredi underscored the importance of considering the immediate and long-term impacts of EV adoption on infrastructure and communities.

8. Other Business

None.

9. Adjournment

The PAC adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Attachments: (0)