

PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WILMAPCO Hybrid-format Meeting, June 17, 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: 13

Serene Abiy, University of Delaware
Robin Bullock, Holloway Terrace
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
Sarah Lester, Cornerstone West
Bill Lower, Committee of 100
Glenn Pusey, Bear Glasgow Council
Anna Quisel, League of Women Voters of New Castle County
Josh Solge, City of Newark
Dave Tancredi, Milltown-Limestone Civic Alliance

Absent: 5

Mark Blake, GHADA
Tracy Chamblee, Southern New Castle County Alliance
Deanna Murphy, Cecil County Board of Realtors
Barry Shotwell, 7/40 Alliance
Vic Singer, Civic League for New Castle County

Staff Members: 5

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

Guests: 0

2. Approval of the April 15, 2024, Meeting Minutes

ACTION: On motion by Glen Pusey, and seconded by Dave Tancredi, PAC approved the April 15, 2024 Meeting Minutes.

3. Public Comment Period:

None.

4. Executive Director's Report:

Ms. Tigist Zegeye shared the following public outreach information:

- The Council met on May 23rd, with several action items including the first one as the Nominating Committee appointed Mr. John Sisson as WILMAPCO's Council Chair and Mr. Stephen O'Connor as Vice Chair for another year term. Other action items included adapting the FY2025 UPWP, having an amendment from the City of Wilmington to include the Wilmington Riverfront Transportation infrastructure projects, they also had two TIP amendments from DelDOT, one to include maintenance on the Beech Street Facilities and the second one is to revised funding for Route 40 between Salem Church and Walther Rd. They self-certified the 2025 Metropolitan Transportation planning process, this is required every year to make sure that we address all federal requirements as an MPO. The council adopted the FY2025 Transportation Improvement Program and endorsed the FY2024 Inter-Regional Report and lastly approved two new PAC members. Following, the action items Council had presentations on Claymont Area Master Plan presented by Ms. Heather Dunigan, another on DART reimaged provided by Mr. John Sisson, East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan Update by Mr. Bill Swiatek.
- On April 17th staff participated in Delaware Safety Summit in Dover
- On April 19th staff attended the Wilmington Earth Day Event
- On April 23rd, staff participated in the Delaware Strategy for EV charging Infrastructure Workgroup
- On April 29th, staff participated in a YWCA of Delaware webinar about transportation equity
- On May 7th, staff participated in the FHWA Resilience Peer Exchange for coastal DOTs and MPOs
- On May 11th, staff participated in the Wilmington Open Streets event
- On May 13th, staff participated in the Transportation Justice Working Group
- WILMAPCO & DelDOT hosted TIP/CTP workshops on April 16th in Newark and another on May 1st in Middletown. The TIP was available for Public Comment from March 18th through May 13th.
- On May 9th, the Claymont Area Master Plan and Governor Printz Monitoring Committee met and held a public workshop on May 20th
- On May 15th, the Churchman's Monitoring Committee had their public meeting
- On May 16th, staff participated in the Downes Elementary Bike to School Event.
- On May 17th, staff participated in Newark Bike to workday.
- On May 21st, the Newport Transportation Plan Monitoring Committee held a workshop at the Newport Town Hall.
- On June 3rd, the Ardens Transportation Monitoring Committee held a meeting
- On June 4th, staff attended the FRA Long Distance Service Study Working Group Meeting
- On June 5th, staff participated in the 2024 Delmarva Freight Summit in Newark
- On June 10th the Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan held an Alternatives Workshop at Cranston Heights Fire Hall with 50 attendees
- On June 12th, the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee held a public workshop with about 45 attendees
- On June 20th the Annual Wilmington Initiatives Public Workshop will be held in the City County Building lobby.
- On June 26th, the Route 9 Monitoring Committee will have a meeting

- On June 27th, the East Elkton Traffic Circulation Safety Study will hold a final workshop at the Elkton Library at 6PM, then staff will present it to Cecil County and Town of Elkton Councils in July and take it to the WILMAPCO Council for endorsement in September.
- On July 17th, staff will participate of the New Castle Count Chambers State of County event
- On July 17th, staff will participate in a Policy Forum titled: Delaware’s Changing Landscape—Transportation & Demographic Challenges in a Post-Covid Era hosted by IPA, DeIDOT, Delaware Population Consortium and WILMAPCO.
- The FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program has been approved by FHWA division office in Dover.
- Staff will be seeking proposals for the new projects stipulated in the FY 2025 UPWP.

ACTION ITEMS:

None.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

5. Claymont Area Master Plan

Ms. Heather Dunigan provided an update on recent developments regarding the Claymont Area Master Plan (CAMP). The second public workshop for the CAMP took place recently, offering a comprehensive overview that also included updates on the monitoring for the North Claymont Area Master Plan and the Governor Printz Blvd Corridor Study. This combined approach was beneficial as the three study areas are adjacent or overlapping, involving similar stakeholders. Consequently, committees from the Monitoring Group and the Advisory Committee for the Claymont Area Master Plan were merged for the public workshop in March, reducing the number of meetings for stakeholders and providing a holistic discussion about the entire area.

The planning process is currently at its midpoint. The first public workshop, focused on visioning, was held in February, following an existing conditions analysis and market assessment. The second workshop, which took place last month, presented various ideas to address community concerns raised during the visioning process. Over the summer, these ideas will be refined based on community feedback and technical assessments to ensure they align with community goals and are feasible. A third public workshop, featuring refined recommendations, is planned for early fall.

Mr. Bill Dunn inquired about PAC representation in Claymont. Ms. Dunigan confirmed that Brett was part of the PAC but had stepped down due to other duties. She noted that WILMAPCO would welcome any representatives if they chose to rejoin the PAC. Monitoring efforts for community and corridor plans are ongoing, involving updates on traffic conditions, land-use changes, and public settings, ensuring that projects progress in alignment with community needs.

Recent developments in the area include the opening of the Claymont train station and the ongoing redevelopment of Tri-State Mall. The Governor Printz Blvd project has advanced into the TIP, with DeIDOT handling project development next. The primary focus for the year is the Claymont Area Master Plan, which broadly addresses land-use, transportation, and the built environment in Claymont, updating the 2004 Claymont Community Development Plan.

Ms. Dunigan provided detailed insights into existing conditions, the market assessment, and community feedback from recent workshops. The community values the small-town feel, variety

of housing, and amenities like the library, community center, and schools. Concerns include traffic impacts from warehousing and data centers, lack of usable parkland, and speeding. Community priorities are improving pedestrian connections, increasing parks and recreational activities, enhancing shopping and dining options, and ensuring transparent, ongoing engagement in the planning process.

Three initial ideas for land use and transportation were presented during the second public workshop, along with updates on monitoring previous studies. Goals for the study include creating a walkable community, encouraging redevelopment, improving streetscapes and urban design, and prioritizing multimodal connections.

Examples of successful projects include Darley Green redevelopment and plans for mixed-use developments like the Claymont Steak Shop. Opportunities for further redevelopment were identified, such as underutilized properties and shopping centers, which could be revitalized to better serve the community and reduce issues like homelessness and drug use.

Ms. Dunigan emphasized the importance of community partnerships and active participation in shaping the future of Claymont, leveraging local insights and best practices to achieve a vibrant, sustainable community and noted locations identified as ideal for redevelopment along Philadelphia Pike. The three land use scenarios build upon each other. Scenario one involves minor updates to modernize the 2004 plan. Scenarios two and three allow for greater density in terms of building heights but would focus development on larger underutilized parcels along the Philadelphia Pike corridor.

Mr. Bill Dunn commented on the stronger support for three-story structures in mixed-use plans. Ms. Dunigan agreed, noting that community feedback from workshops suggests a preference for scenario two, with most people finding four-story standards excessive. Mr. Dunn inquired about Claymont's history as an incorporated town, and Ms. Dunigan confirmed that it never was, although it has a more urban feel compared to other areas like Centerville, Greenville, or Saint Georges.

Mr. Dunn noted that Claymont had been a company town, primarily due to Phoenix Steel, with businesses supporting the interests of its workers. Ms. Anna Quisel mentioned that a four-story building, like the example presented from Alexandria, provided more opportunities for affordable housing in a walkable area, to which Mr. Dunn observed that most buildings in the area were three stories. Mr. Mike Kaszyski added that village design standards in county codes could be applied, ensuring four-story mixed-use buildings are well-integrated.

The presentation continued with Ms. Dunigan sharing that transportation improvements are also crucial. Speeding, difficulty crossing streets, and crash rates are significant issues on the wide, fast Philadelphia Pike with many driveways. Road diets, curb extensions, median refuges, roundabouts, and better transit amenities can address these concerns. Properly implemented road diets can improve safety, while access management and driveway consolidation, although challenging topics, are necessary. In summary, the scenarios range from minor improvements to more radical changes, with the third scenario proposing the elimination of two-way center turn lanes, replacing them with medians and roundabouts. Community feedback is mixed, but these measures aim to enhance safety, walkability, and overall connectivity.

Ms. Dunigan concluded by mentioning the summer assessments and the upcoming public workshop in the fall. Draft performance measures, such as walking distance to transit and parks, support for affordable housing, environmental impacts, and transportation safety, will guide the

evaluation of these scenarios. The project has a dedicated website and Facebook page for further information and community engagement.

Mr. Richard Janney asked about the population growth rate, to which Ms. Dunigan referred him to the website or the task 1 report for detailed demographic information.

Mr. Glenn Pusey inquired about coordination with the old steel plant redevelopment, and Ms. Dunigan confirmed that it is part of the North Claymont Area Master Plan, coordinated through the monitoring committee. Mr. Pusey suggested the old steel plant and the old mall as locations for additional housing, and Ms. Dunigan agreed, noting plans for high-density housing near the train station and along the river.

Mr. Joshua Solge asked about parking utilization in developments like Darley Green, and Ms. Dunigan explained the design features that make it feel like a traditional community despite having adequate parking.

6. Kirkwood Highway Corridor Land Use and Transportation Plan

Mr. Dave Gula provided an update on the ongoing project, focusing on the progress made since the last discussion in April. The centerpiece of his presentation was the Alternative Workshop held on June 10th, where he outlined the project's status, and the information presented to the public during the event.

A significant aspect of the project is the collaboration among key partners, including DeIDOT, New Castle County Land Use, and DTC, given the importance of the Kirkwood Highway Route 6 bus stop, the most used in New Castle County. Mr. Gula emphasized the importance of ensuring that all partners are consistently informed, and he expressed satisfaction with the collaboration thus far.

Mr. Dave Gula made a brief presentation to provide an update on the project. The last discussion regarding this project was in April, and several elements have progressed since then. The focus of this presentation was the Alternative Workshop held on June 10th. Mr. Gula gave an overview of the project and what was presented to the public that evening.

Approximately 55 people attended the June 10th workshop, many of whom were new to the project. Short presentations were given at 5:00 PM and 5:45 PM. The main goal was to direct people to the new boards and gather their comments on the scenarios and alternatives before diving deep into the analysis.

A previous workshop in February laid the groundwork for the scenarios, focusing on high-level points. The June workshop aimed to gather detailed comments from attendees. Mr. Gula shared that a key activity was mapping where attendees live, work, and play, comparing this data to previous workshops to identify any underrepresented areas. Additionally, translation services were available, though uptake has been minimal. While the interpreter table catered primarily to Hispanic language needs, more outreach is planned to engage other communities. One consultant is working on outreach ideas involving church congregations, particularly Saint Paul's and Holy Angels, to better involve the community.

The project aims to strengthen various transportation modes while ensuring that any changes do not negatively impact existing neighborhoods or businesses. Recognizing the inevitability of

change, the goal is to adapt the corridor to future growth and allow residents to comment on how this growth will occur.

The project's vision is to enhance the Kirkwood Highway corridor by improving facilities for walking, biking, and transit, while ensuring the safety of existing neighborhoods and businesses. Recognizing the current lack of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, the project aims to create a safer, multimodal corridor. Mr. Gula highlighted the need to reduce traffic speeds and address safety issues at major intersections, such as Limestone Road and Kirkwood Highway, where crashes are common.

Public feedback was sought on various road configurations, with a focus on balancing the corridor's dual role as a local shopping street and a traffic artery. The project also explored potential transit improvements, including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), though it was concluded that smaller enhancements to transit facilities might be more appropriate given the local traffic patterns.

Safety improvements, such as roundabouts, were also considered, though their feasibility in high-traffic areas is limited. Public opinion on roundabouts was mixed, indicating the need for further discussion. Different scenarios for the corridor were presented, with attendees encouraged to visit the project's website for more details and to provide feedback. An interactive portion of the workshop involved placing colored dots on maps to indicate support or opposition to specific improvements, which will help guide future decisions.

Potential safety improvements, such as roundabouts, were also discussed. While roundabouts can significantly reduce crashes and fatalities, they may not be feasible in all areas due to high traffic volumes and limited space. The public's feedback on roundabouts was mixed, indicating a need for further education and discussion.

Mr. Gula presented different scenarios for the corridor, acknowledging that each section has unique characteristics. He encouraged attendees to visit the project's website for more detailed information and to provide feedback. The interactive portion of the workshop involved placing green or blue dots on areas where attendees supported certain improvements and red dots where they opposed them. This feedback helps guide decisions on grade separations, pedestrian overpasses, access management, and other enhancements.

In conclusion, Mr. Gula's presentation highlighted the progress made, the collaborative efforts with key partners, and the ongoing public engagement. The goal is to create a safer, more accessible, and vibrant corridor that accommodates future growth while meeting the needs of all users. Mr. Gula invited any questions from the panel regarding his presentation.

Mr. Bill Dunn inquired about the feasibility of speeding on Kirkwood Highway, given that it often becomes a parking lot at certain times. He noted that outside of peak periods, the roadway is quite wide, allowing for higher speeds. He observed that after COVID-19, many drivers who had gotten used to driving at high speeds continued to do so, as law enforcement was occupied with other duties. This has led to an increase in road rage and reckless driving incidents.

Mr. Dave Gula responded by stating that DelDOT has acknowledged the need to reconfigure roads to influence driver behavior. He pointed out that wider lanes generally lead to higher speeds. He shared his personal experience of avoiding certain roads and expressed frustration with the traffic conditions.

Mr. Dave Tancredi added to the discussion by sharing his recent experience of returning from the beach late at night and observing drivers speeding well above the limit. He mentioned that in some areas, speeding is controlled strictly due to the presence of pedestrians and high crash rates.

Mr. Bill Dunn shared some historical context, mentioning that Kirkwood Highway was designed in 1952 to move large numbers of cars efficiently. He highlighted the dramatic population growth and increased number of vehicles over the years, suggesting that the current road infrastructure is outdated. Mr. Mike Kazsyski emphasized that population growth and an increase in the number of working household members have doubled traffic volumes, leading to significant congestion.

Mr. Bill Dunn recounted a story from his childhood, illustrating how public transportation was more viable in the past. He noted that his personal experience living in the area has given him a deep understanding of the local traffic challenges. He proposed the creation of a new artery to alleviate congestion, especially with anticipated further development in Pike Creek. He advocated for a plan that has been considered since 1968 to create a connection through Delaware Park to Kirkwood Highway.

Mr. Mike Kazsyski discussed the broader issue of linear corridors and the lack of a grid system, which exacerbates traffic problems. He pointed out that similar issues are seen in other areas, such as the Lehigh Valley, and emphasized the need for parallel routes and better connectivity.

Mr. Bill Dunn proposed the idea of acquiring additional land to create a transportation hub with micro-buses to improve local transit options. Mr. Dave Gula acknowledged the importance of public comments in shaping plans and mentioned the potential for new routes and transfer opportunities.

Mr. Mike Kazsyski questioned the viability of light rail or trolley systems, considering the existing bus service and the financial implications of new infrastructure. Mr. Dave Gula explained that while Delaware's current population density does not justify the cost of light rail, there is potential for future transit development if ridership increases significantly. Mr. Mike Kazsyski speculated on alternative funding methods, such as toll roads, to support new transit infrastructure.

Mr. Dave Gula concluded by encouraging participants to submit their comments in writing to ensure they are considered in future planning efforts. He thanked everyone for their input.

7. Other Business

Mr. Dave Tancredi began the discussion by referring to a New York Post article published on June 6th, which detailed New York's plans to install speed cameras. He asked if anyone on the call or in the room had read the article. He then highlighted the article's relevance, particularly noting his extensive experience with speed cameras from his work in Montgomery County, north of DC. Despite his nervousness about potentially coming across as a "jerk," he felt it was important to share his experiences, suspecting they might foreshadow the future of New Castle County.

Mr. Tancredi briefly summarized the article, which reported that Newark officials were advancing plans to install automatic speed cameras to address persistent speeding issues. City Manager Tom Coleman was tasked with drafting a list of potential sites. A pilot program on I-95 during construction in Wilmington had shown promising results, with crashes decreasing by 50% and

speeds by 12%. Two cameras were to be initially installed in Newark, costing \$5,700 monthly, with violations reviewed by the camera company and Newark Police Department for final approval. Fines would cover the costs, and cameras would only be placed where a speed study showed the 85th percentile speed exceeded the limit by 5 mph.

Mr. Tancredi expressed concerns about the program's potential expansion over the next decade, fearing an overreach similar to what he observed in Montgomery County, which he described as densely populated and heavily trafficked. Montgomery County had significantly increased its number of speed cameras from 40 in 2020 to over 300, including designated speed corridors. Despite public support for the cameras, as indicated by surveys, there was also considerable opposition, with some viewing them as revenue generators rather than safety measures.

Mr. Tancredi presented crash data from Montgomery County, showing that while overall crashes and fatalities had not significantly decreased, injury crashes had dropped by 20% from 2018 to 2023, suggesting some positive impact on safety.

Mr. Tancredi emphasized the importance of transparent communication with the public, noting that revenue from speed cameras had decreased during the pandemic, prompting the county to double fines. He warned that similar measures in New Castle County could lead to a perception of the program as a cash grab rather than a safety initiative.

Ms. Heather Dunigan expressed support for speed cameras, emphasizing the need for a quantitative approach to their placement. Mr. Dave Gula proposed inviting Newark officials to discuss their plans, aiming for transparency and clear goals. Mr. Tancredi reiterated his concerns about potential public backlash and the need for focused evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of speed cameras in reducing injuries and changing driver behavior.

Mr. Josh Solge from the City of Newark acknowledged the early stage of their policy development and appreciated the insights provided by Mr. Tancredi. He promised to relay the concerns and research to city officials.

The meeting concluded with a consensus on the importance of careful implementation and ongoing public communication to ensure the speed camera program is perceived as a genuine effort to improve road safety rather than a revenue-generating scheme.

8. Adjournment

The PAC adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Attachments: (0)