

PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WILMAPCO Hybrid-format Meeting, December 18, 2023

Minutes prepared by Elizabeth Espinal.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski, PAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present: 10

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

Absent: 6

Serene Abiy, University of Delaware
Mark Blake, GHADA
Richard Janney, Southern New Castle County
Deanna Murphy, Cecil County Board of Realtors
Glenn Pusey, Bear Glasgow Council
Vic Singer, Civic League for New Castle County

Staff Members: 5

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner
Elizabeth Espinal, Administrative Assistant
Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner
Dawn Voss, Outreach Coordinator
Tigist Zegeye, Principal Planner

Guests:

None

2. Approval of the October 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Bill Dunn seconded by Mr. Barry Shotwell the PAC approved the October 16, 2023, PAC Meeting Minutes.

3. Public Comment Period:

None.

4. Executive Director's Report:

Ms. Tigist Zegeye shared the following public outreach information:

- The council met November 9th and had several action items. They endorsed the Technical Scoring Project Prioritization for Delaware Bike/PED program. The council approved several TIP amendments including Belvidere Road Bridge replacement funding: DeIDOT amendments, including the I-95 viaduct rehabilitation, I-295 project, and SR4 Harmony Road. The council also approved the TIP amendment for revised funding for Cedar Lane Road. They viewed three presentations including: 2050 Maryland's Transportation Plan, 2023 Population Projections and the FY2024 UPWP Project Updates by WILMAPCO planners.
- On October 20th staff participated in a University of Delaware class discussion on engineering efforts.
- On October 21st, Staff presented to Women's Transportation Seminar.
- On October 23rd Staff presented to Newark City Council meeting regarding the Newark Bike Plan.
- Churchman's Crossing Monitoring Committee met on October 25th.
- On October 26 staff and partners had a Public Workshop for the East Elkton Plan at Elkton's Public Library.
- On October 31st Staff participated in Cecil County, MDOT CTP Tour Meeting.
- On November 1st Staff participated in Susquehanna River Crossing Pedestrian & Bike Route stakeholder meeting.
- On November 8th the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee met.
- On November 13th & December 14th the East Elkton Steering Committee and partners held a meeting.
- The Ardens Monitoring Committee kickoff meeting was held on November 14th and the next meeting is scheduled for January 5th.
- On November 16th Kirkwood Highway Corridor Study partners held their first committee meeting.
- On November 17th the South Claymont and Philadelphia Corridor Master Plan partners had a kickoff meeting.
- On November 27th Staff participated of the opening of the Claymont Transportation Center.
- On November 28th staff presented our TJ work to a University of Washington Health and Sustainable Transportation class.
- Staff are collaborating with Healthy Communities Delaware to present at the Equity Action conference in April.
- On December 4th, Staff presented at the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Peer Exchange
- On December 7, staff participated in the Delaware Freight Summit in Dover.
- On December 7th the Newport Transportation Study Monitoring Committee met.
- On December 11th the Kirkwood Highway Corridor Master Plan Visioning Workshop was held.
- On December 14, staff attended the COT (Council of Transportation) Meeting.
- On December 21st the Route 9 Monitoring Committee will have a meeting.
- Staff continues to coordinate with DVRPC on a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant for the Philadelphia MSA
- Staff continue to update the Inter-Regional Draft Report which we expect to present at the next meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

None.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

5. East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan

In the presentation, Mr. Bill Swiatek provided an update on the East Elkton traffic circulation and safety plan. The study area includes three corridors: Belle Hill Road, Muddy Lane, and Delancy Road, with Route 40 as the southern boundary and Appleton Road as the northern boundary. Mr. Swiatek further explained that this plan was initially two UPWP planning requests received from Cecil County and the town of Elkton that have been combined due to their proximity. Mr. Swiatek shared that the lead consultant is Wallace Montgomery, and there is a diverse steering committee guiding the project.

Goals in this plan include understanding traffic patterns, realigning Delancy Road and Muddy Lane, resolving land-use conflicts, improving road safety, and enhancing walking and cycling connectivity. Mr. Swiatek further explained that the planning process involves assessing existing conditions, envisioning, drafting recommendations, and finalizing work. The presentation highlighted safety data, including crash clusters and the effectiveness of the Muddy Lane roundabout. Concerns from the community survey covered issues like traffic volumes, speeding, lack of walking/biking paths, and challenges at specific intersections.

Mr. Swiatek provided an overview of the community engagement initiatives, outlining plans for two surveys and a workshop. While noting the positive participation reflected in 121 received survey responses in the first of two planned surveys, he emphasized the ongoing efforts to specifically engage with communities and address concerns related to transportation justice. Community concerns, as revealed in the survey results, encompassed issues such as traffic safety, blind spots, the coexistence of truck and private vehicle traffic, and challenges at the Amtrak underpass. Notably, safety apprehensions were detailed, with 65% expressing significant concerns about Delancy Road, 54% expressing significant concerns about Muddy Lane, and 34% expressing similar concerns about Belle Hill Road. Survey respondents expressed interest in better walking connections to downtown, shopping destinations, parks, and residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Swiatek indicated that the planning process is currently at the midpoint. The upcoming phases involve additional public workshops and a second survey to gather input on draft recommendations. The final recommendations are scheduled to be presented at a third public workshop, anticipated to take place in the summertime.

Mr. Dave Trancredi expressed his concerns about the Muddy Lane RR underpass, citing a similar situation on Telegraph Road with two trucks getting stuck in the last six months. He suggested that lessons learned from that experience could be applied to the other underpass. Mr. Trancredi also mentioned the duplication of the Casho Mill Road experience with “clankers” but expressed uncertainty about the details.

In response, Mr. Bill Swiatek shared the challenging landscape near the roadway, with limited space on either side. He emphasized the need to consider walking connections and encouraged consultants to explore broader opportunities, such as pathways between communities, beyond just roads. Mr. Swiatek mentioned ongoing property developments as an opportunity.

6. Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan

Mr. Dan Blevins initiated the presentation by stating that this marked another addition to the series of sub-corridor studies. He mentioned the familiarity of certain elements and participants throughout these studies. The focus of this presentation was on the corridor spanning from just

east of Newark to Elsmere and the Wilmington City boundary. Referring to familiar locations like Kirkwood Hwy, Concord Pike, and Churchman's Crossing, Mr. Blevins highlighted the need to assess the corridor's growth and development. The presentation aimed to delve into existing neighborhoods, land use patterns, and development scenarios. The process involved five tasks: identifying issues, community visioning, exploring potential land use, considering various scenarios based on community preferences, and analyzing the corridor's economic role.

Mr. Blevins introduced a unique aspect of this study, involving a market analysis of Kirkwood Highway's evolution over the years and projected economic growth. This analysis focused on understanding the corridor's economic significance within New Castle County and the broader region. Mr. Blevins emphasized that all presented information, including maps and interactive features, was accessible on the project page. Task one involved examining demographic changes within the corridor, particularly focusing on the Hispanic population, age groups, and shifts over the past two decades.

The presentation highlighted data sources like Streetlight and various platforms to understand corridor usage, origins, and destinations. A scatter plot map illustrated interactions within the corridor, revealing patterns related to different times of the day and trip types. Traffic patterns along Kirkwood Highway were scrutinized, showcasing the diminishing percentage of people travelling the full corridor as they moved from Newark towards Wilmington at 1.8% progression and from Wilmington to Newark it's a 2.0% travelling the entire corridor. The presentation aimed to uncover the corridor's dynamics and opportunities for improvement, considering factors like traffic flow and commercial activities.

Mr. David Tancredi raised a comment suggesting that the Kirkwood Highway serves as a significant traffic route between Newark and Wilmington, facilitating movement in both directions. He added that Dan mentioned the utilization of data sources to track the progression of people along Kirkwood Highway, revealing a decline in the number of individuals traversing the entire corridor as they move further from their starting points. Mr. Tancredi inquired about the importance of understanding traffic patterns and opportunities for development along the highway.

Mr. Blevins delved into the analysis of movements and traffic volumes along specific points of Kirkwood Highway. The conversation highlighted the challenge of rationalizing data to gain a clearer understanding of the evolving traffic dynamics. The focus was on investigating the corridor's development and making informed decisions for its future. Mr. Bill Dunn contributed to the discussion, mentioning the challenges with the traffic on Kirkwood Highway, emphasizing that significant work has not been done on the road since its original design in 1980. Mr. Dan Blevins provided historical context, citing intermittent efforts over time, like Parkland shopping center, and others close to the highway.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski, expressed the need for better and different use of the area. He suggested changes be made for the utilization of 2-3 businesses along the highway catering to those passing through, needing gas, or a car wash service.

Bill Dunn commented on ongoing infrastructure investments and development plans, mentioning three different segments and the central part as areas of focus. He discussed the historical development of commercial areas along Kirkwood Highway in proximity to Red Mill Rd, Poly Drummond Hill Rd, Harmony Road, Newport, and Route 141.

In response, Mr. Dan Blevins acknowledged the complexity of the situation. He highlighted the significance of market analysis, retail dynamics, and employment densities in shaping the future

development of Kirkwood Highway, acknowledging that these aspects will be explored in greater detail as the planning process progresses.

Transitioning the presentation to the market analysis, Mr. Dave Gula continued the presentation and underscored the corridor's strengths, such as a robust labor market, but also pointed out the lack of significant Class A office spaces. The discussion touched upon retail dynamics, emphasizing the corridor's role as a local shopping area.

Mr. Gula explained the team's use of a "listening tour" conducted to understand stakeholders' perspectives. Safety concerns, traffic congestion, pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, and affordable housing emerged as prominent themes during these interviews. The presentation delved into the outcomes of the visioning workshop held the previous week, attended by approximately 100 participants. The discussion covered safety challenges, traffic congestion, and the absence of green spaces along the corridor. Attendees expressed concerns about street racing and highlighted the need for targeted infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Gula acknowledged the success of the workshop, with engaged participants offering valuable insights. A live-work-play map was mentioned as a tool to track community feedback, and the importance of community involvement in shaping the corridor's future was emphasized. Moving forward, the presentation outlined the availability of workshop materials on the website and an online survey to gather additional input. The next steps involve collecting additional feedback, formulating a draft vision statement, engaging an advisory committee, and exploring project possibilities within the corridor.

Additional comments and questions were raised including Mr. Bill Dunn, highlighting the segmentation of Kirkwood Highway into five different segments, noting his frequent use of parts of the highway for specific purposes throughout the day. Referencing that work is needed to alleviate traffic congestion.

Ms. Anna Quisel expressed a keen interest in the concept of a "stroad" where roads initially focus on moving people quickly but eventually incorporate shopping areas and destinations. The emphasis was on creating a walkable and livable environment along Kirkwood Highway, challenging the conventional idea of the road as solely for vehicular use. Mr. Dan Blevins responded by discussing the broad definition of a stroad, ranging from streets to principal roads designed for significant vehicle traffic. The conversation delved into the complexity of defining a stroad and the need to consider traffic design, intersections, and improvements tailored to the roadway's purpose.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski, touched on the historical development of Kirkwood Highway and the lack of foresight in creating parallel connectors for neighborhoods. The need to incorporate pedestrian improvements, create a quasi-grid layout, and explore additional connections for walkability and safety was highlighted. Mr. Blevins emphasized the importance of identifying smaller, cost-effective solutions to enhance the corridor's accessibility before 2050. The conversation also referred to ongoing outreach events and community conversations to address various concerns and suggestions related to Kirkwood Highway.

Mr. Tancredi expressed surprise upon learning during the visioning meeting that one of the comments emphasized the desire for more greenery along Kirkwood Highway. As an engineer, he concurred with the sentiment, acknowledging the potential positive impact of increased green spaces on the corridor.

Mr. Bill Dunn further emphasized the need for pathways connecting shopping areas, residential zones, and parks to promote safer alternatives to vehicular travel. Mr. Barry Shotwell highlighted the challenges pedestrians face in navigating Kirkwood Highway and the potential role of improved intersections and crossings in enhancing safety.

Mr. Joshua Solge, inquired out of curiosity whether accident data indicated pedestrian incidents occurring at intersections or between them, seeking insights into safety concerns. Mr. Dave Gula concluded by addressing the issue of jaywalking and the importance of creating a connected network for bus users, ensuring safe crossing points between stops is a priority.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Adjournment

The PAC adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Attachments: (0)