

PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

WILMAPCO Conference Room, August 13, 2018

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Mark Blake, GHADA
Carlos de los Ramos, AARP
Pat Folk, Cecil County
Tom Fruehstorfer, City of Newark
Mario Gangemi, Cecil County Chamber of Commerce
Bill Lower, Committee of 100
Bill Osborne, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce
Tom Posatko, Delmarva Rail Passenger Association
Barry Shotwell, 7/40 Alliance (Vice Chair)
Vic Singer, Civic League for New Castle County
Antonio Valenzuela, City of Wilmington (Chair)

Absent:

Dave Carter, Southern New Castle County
Darlene Cole, Elderly and Disabled Transit Advisory Committee
Bill Dunn, Civic League for New Castle County
Ken Grant, AAA Mid-Atlantic
Dick Janney, Southern New Castle County
Glenn Pusey, Bear Glasgow Council
Barbara Mobarak, League of Women Voters
Gail Seitz, City of New Castle
Dave Tancredi, Milltown-Limestone Civic Alliance
Javier Torrijos, Delaware Hispanic Commission
Frank Vari, Chesapeake City

Staff Members:

Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Randi Novakoff, Outreach Manager
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Guests:

John Flaherty, Citizen
D. Marque Hall, Citizen
Sophia Schmidt, Delaware Public Media

Minutes prepared by Janet Butler from recording.

Antonio Valenzuela, PAC Chair, called the meeting to order.

6:30 PM

Approval of Meeting Minutes

6:32 PM

ACTION: On motion by Mario Gangemi, seconded by Vic Singer the PAC approved the June 18, meeting minutes.

Motion passed

(8/13/18-01)

2. Public Comment:

6:35 PM

None.

3. Executive Director’s Report:

6:40 PM

Ms. Zegeye reported that the WILMAPCO Council on July 12, 2018, amended the FY 2018-2021 TIP, for the grouped Highway Safety Improvement Program; released proposed amendments to the FY 2019-2022 TIP, including use of CMAQ, STP, TAP and Transit Urbanized Area and Transit 5310 Funds for public comment; and endorsed the Elkton Pedestrian Plan. Presentations by staff included updates on the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and New Castle County Bicycle Plan.

Ms. Zegeye shared the following public outreach information:

- Staff attended the Wilmington Comprehensive Plan meeting.
- Staff exhibited at a Southbridge Weekend Health Fair in Wilmington.
- The US 202 Master Corridor Plan public information session was held at Talleyville Fire Hall. Two hundred people attended the session. A visioning workshop will be held in the fall.
- Staff exhibited at 55+ Healthy Lifestyles Expo in Elkton.
- The next Route 9 Corridor Master Plan Steering Committee meeting is set for August 21.
- Staff continues to support the development of the Newark Sustainability Plan. Their next Steering Committee meeting is set for August 22.
- A joint WILMAPCO/DeIDOT TIP public workshop will be held on September 5 at the Newark Library from 4:00-7:00 p.m.
- The Cecil County Tour meeting will be held on September 25 at the County Administration Office.
- Staff will exhibit at Newark Community Day on September 16. PAC is invited to participate in this event.
- Staff is working on the Environmental Justice (EJ) and Transportation Justice (TJ) Report. PAC is invited to join the Steering Committee.
- The Newark Area Transit Study Management Committee met in August. Staff has been working on the Newark Transit Survey of transit drivers, riders, business organizations, and residents.
- The Southern New Castle County (SNCC) Master Plan Request for Proposal (RFP) went out. Whitman, Requardt, and Associates were selected.
- The Delmarva Freight Summit was held on June 20 in Dover.

ACTION ITEMS:

4. Public Outreach for the FY 2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Novakoff said the TIP lists all the projects that are proposed for funding. She distributed a packet that included a flyer announcing that a joint DeIDOT and WILMAPCO Public Workshop will be held on Wednesday, September 5, 2018, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., at the Newark Free Library; WILMAPCO E-News TIP article example; online webpage views; and the TIP quick guide. She said page 2 of the packet includes an example of a legal notice for the News Journal and the Cecil Whig.

Two thousand, six-hundred people are subscribed to the E-News, 30% opened it, and 17 have clicked the TIP link. Page 4 of the packet includes an example of an e-blast that was sent to 10,000 people. Thirteen percent opened the blast and 100 clicked on the links.

WILMAPCO publishes on average two TIP articles in its Transporter newsletter, which is sent to 5,500 people. An example of the press release is also included in the packet. The news release is typically picked up by community newspapers and/or local radio.

WILMAPCO had 130 web hits on its TIP page. Visitors to the page spend an average of four minutes. The meeting was also advertised on social media via Facebook. WILMAPCO reached 4,000 people and had 39 responses to its Facebook Event. One public comment has been received so far. Ms. Novakoff invited PAC members to take this information back to their organizations and submit public comments.

Vic Singer asked if the points near the bottom line of the page can be changed to be more readable. Ms. Novakoff said she is likely unable to adjust the chart formatting, but will try.

Javier Torrijos asked if staff talked to other agencies regarding putting the information on their websites. Ms. Novakoff said that we've primarily worked with DeIDOT, DART and RideShare Delaware, but could try other organizations. Bill Osborne asked for an explanation of the demographic regarding women 35 to 44 (19%), in the event chart. Ms. Novakoff said the female demographic is the largest demographic who interacted with the Facebook event.

ACTION: On motion by Pat Folk, seconded by Mario Gangemi the PAC approved the public outreach for the FY 2019 TIP.

Motion passed

(8/13/18-02)

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

5. Coalition to Keep Bus Service on Rodney Square

7:00 PM

Mr. John Flaherty distributed a letter dated August 13, 2018, addressed to the PAC Chair and members of the PAC, entitled The Coalition to Keep Bus Service on Rodney Square. He read the letter aloud to PAC.

He said the Coalition and nearly 2,300 citizens have signed petitions to Governor Carney urging the restoration of the Rodney Square Bus Hub that was dismantled by DART, with WILMAPCO's support on December 17, 2017. One of the recommendations

in the report was to address the class/status issues at Rodney Square. The recommendation makes the point that “Buses are not the cause of the loitering/panhandling/homeless problem at Rodney Square or in the downtown area.” Bus riders are customers of the transit system who go to the square to get on or off a bus. These riders are a separate population from the homeless or those panhandling around the square.

Mr. Flaherty also said that pronouncements by the Governor, public officials, lobbyists, and others who would benefit by the dismantling of a bus hub ignore this recommendation and bring into question exactly why this hub was being dismantled.

He said several e-mails were sent between a chemical industry lobbyist and Delaware’s Governor and private meetings were held.

Mr. Flaherty feels the public did not have an equal opportunity to participate in the public process prior to the removal of bus stops at Rodney Square. He said the bus hub is essential to the freedom of mobility for those who cannot afford a car such as single parents, students, senior citizens, and disabled citizens.

Mr. Flaherty said DART’s former bus stops on Rodney Square provided a safe, secure, and convenient transit hub for thousands of workers, businesses, and shoppers who benefited from the ease and convenience of making bus connections in one central location since 1992.

He concluded that The Coalition to Keep Bus Service on Rodney Square urges the WILMAPO PAC to fight for the public interest and not for the special interest, and support the restoration of the Rodney Square Bus Hub.

Mr. Flaherty referred to a second letter in the handout to PAC, dated December 14, 2017, from Councilman Robert S. Weiner, New Castle County Council, which stated that New Castle County Council is concerned that the public hearing process was not as transparent as it should have been because public hearing notices failed to indicate that stops at Rodney Square for at least 14 routes were being discontinued.

Discontinuing bus stops on Rodney Square for routes serving mostly poor and minority passengers may be deemed discriminatory and thus be determined to be in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Mr. D. Marque Hall, Delaware resident, said in the past, no bus service on Sundays was called “discrimination by neglect.” He said we should be mindful about people who ride the bus. He said in 2018 poor black people and all other people were not welcomed at Rodney Square, because the buses were rerouted. The people were moved to side streets instead of the square, which has benches and shelters. On the side streets, there is nowhere to sit, so bus riders are forced to sit on the ground. Many of the new bus stops do not have seats or shelters.

Mr. Valenzuela said the decisions made by the government are not necessarily just about race. Mr. D. Marque Hall said it is also a class problem. Mr. Valenzuela said he believes that people who have vehicles have more clout in the government. However, the issue we are talking about is dismantling the bus hub. He asked if we move the

transit hub, does it solve the problem. Mr. D. Marque Hall said that he is aware that a new hub is being planned, but he wants to make sure it is welcoming for everyone.

Mr. Singer asked why there is no one at this PAC meeting from DART. Ms. Zegeye said that Mr. Sisson, DART Chief Executive Officer, presented at the April 2018 PAC meeting. He said he asked for a follow-up with DTC at the last meeting, regarding when and where the new hub would be completed. Ms. Novakoff said she did follow up with DART, and they did not have any new information.

Mr. Osborne said the public/private partnership had no intention of displacing people from the transit hub. It was delayed due to Wilmington zoning approval, which has been now been approved.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Mark Blake seconded by Mr. Vic Singer the PAC will ask DART why the bus shelters were removed and why they cannot be restored until the new bus hub is up and operational.

Motion passed

(8/13/18-03)

8 were in favor, 0 against, and 3 abstained
(Tom Fruehstorfer, Bill Osborn, Carlos de los Ramos abstained)

6. 12th Street Connector and East 7th Street Peninsula Roadway and Infrastructure Improvement Study

7:20 PM

Mr. Gula said the goals of the 12th street Connector project are to improve access to the Wilmington Central Business District (CBD) and the Brandywine Riverfront; improve multi-modal network linkages; improve traffic operations; support economic development and job creation; and provide better accommodations for freight movement for local businesses while minimizing impacts to the community.

The project team hopes to build community support; update previous studies; assess opportunities; costs, and impacts; agree on a preferred alternative; and create an actionable plan to secure funding and move into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

The established conditions include community; parks; churches; schools; shopping centers; employment centers; historic places; and vacant and underutilized properties. Some existing conditions include brownfield sites; Brandywine Creek; floodplains; combined-sewer overflows; and a deep-water quarry. Other conditions include nearby bike routes; transit connectivity; disjointed street networks; missing sidewalks, ramps and crosswalks; and congested intersections.

The March 2005 Traffic Analysis was completed, which included Level of Service (LOS) D at Northeast 12th Street and updated counts.

The crash evaluation includes a 3-year period, of 140 crashes were reported along Vandever Avenue and 12th Street. Most incidents occurred at Northeast 12th Street, Northeast/Vandever Avenue, and Vandever Avenue/Thatcher Street. Twenty-four incidents involved parked cars along Vandever Avenue. Six pedestrian incidents were reported along Vandever Avenue; and there were no fatalities.

The Northeast Brandywine Riverfront Area Plan is ongoing. The EPA funded the study with the City of Wilmington, which includes community development opportunities with Brownfield Redevelopment. Planning objectives include:

- To realize the full potential of the Brandywine River as a community asset that draws local residents as well as visitors.
- To achieve a balance between economic and recreational development opportunities in a way that benefits the local community.
- To improve existing and established new multi-modal connections that improves neighborhood walkability and bicycle friendliness.
- To formulate a strategy for the redevelopment of brownfield sites.
- To address flooding and storm water management issues in the study area.
- To prioritize implementation by identifying specific next steps, phasing, and potential funding opportunities.

Mr. Gula said that public outreach is an important component of the plan, which will help us understand the community's needs. During the breakout sessions at the public workshops, the following discussion questions were included:

- What are the biggest issues we should address as part of this study?
- What are the barriers that make mobility difficult?
- What community features should we preserve or enhance?
- What are your biggest concerns about this project?
- What do you hope this project will accomplish?
- Where should we consider alignments for the 12th Street Connector?

The next steps are compiling public comments, coordinating with the area-wide plan team, developing transportation alternatives, assessing potential benefits and impacts, and modeling traffic operations.

Mr. Osborne asked who is the lead public agency regarding brownfields. Mr. Gula said the local representatives.

Mr. Blake asked if there are any private developers interested in development along the water. Mr. Gula said there were some initial proposals from the City of Wilmington for high-end development, which are a concern because the development should be appropriate for the area.

Mr. Gula said the purpose of the East 7th Street Roadway and Infrastructure Improvements study is to promote economic development, reduce or eliminate flooding, evaluate the roadway network, discern feasibility of a new access point via crossing Brandywine Creek, evaluate the utility infrastructure, determine land use, open space, and developmental potential, and utilize the multimodal complete streets approach that would be in compliance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

Flooding issues need to be addressed regarding where, when, and how long flooding occurs. Short- and long-term solutions need to be determined. In addition, the environmental constraints and resources need to be addressed, such as existence on a 100-year floodplain, sea level rise, and wetlands issues. Other considerations are hazmat, which includes Noramco Inc. and Compass Marine Corporation; brownfields;

and the cultural resources and amenities of Fort Christina, Kalmar Nyckel Foundation, and Babiarz Park.

The existing transportation network requires an analysis of existing travel modes (no DART service yet), vehicles, pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and water modes; exploration of DART Routes 8 and 15 modifications; and bicycle/pedestrian improvements.

The resulting study alternatives include a vision for growth and sustainability, short- and – long-term recommendations, alternatives that work with existing property owners, open space, historic/cultural preservations, and possible recreational amenities, such as pop-up parks, kayak launches, and food trucks.

7. US 202 Corridor Master Plan

7:40 PM

Mr. Gula said the goal of the U.S. 202 Corridor Master Plan is to create a plan for redevelopment along the U.S. 202 Corridor to create a high-quality and attractive multi-modal corridor with provisions for integrating land use and transportation that promote walkability, bikeability, and place-making. The U.S. 202 Corridor Master Plan will build upon the results of the 2017 U.S. 202 Market Assessment and a Community Visioning Workshop in fall 2018.

The study incorporates the US 202 Market Study (2017); trends and future market dynamics; and the strength of the market for each of these land uses. The U.S. 202 was designed for the automobile, not for pedestrians or cyclists. The Average Daily Traffic (ADT) counts are about 55,550 vehicles daily.

Mr. Gula said the U.S. 202 Corridor carries considerable vehicle volume. It accommodates both commuter and local traffic. It acts as a “STROAD”, which is a street that wants to be a road, but may not serve either function well. Residents are concerned that any redevelopment will increase traffic. A multi-modal transportation network properly integrated with mixed-use development does not necessarily increase traffic on local roads.

Most of New Castle County’s forecasted population growth is due to in-migration from surrounding counties. The cost of living and doing business in Delaware is lower than neighboring states. New Castle County is a job hub with more jobs than workers, at this time. A high percentage of the County’s jobs are in professional and business services, health care, and financial activities. Jobs in the County are expected to increase over the next ten years.

Residents of New Castle County enjoy a relatively low unemployment rate. New Castle County residents are well-educated and have incomes above the national average. The U.S. 202 Corridor is convenient to a large market that is best characterized as high-income and well-educated.

The Route 202 Corridor Study has revealed that there is a need for product diversity on Concord Pike to compete for a broader range of tenants. Multi-family housing in a mixed-use setting is in demand for the corridor. Better multi-modal access is critical to supporting existing retail store productivity. Consumers are looking for a good experience as well as a good deal.

The U.S. 202 Corridor has similar market characteristics to successful large-scale mixed-use town center developments. There are opportunities for mixed-use development along the U.S. 202 Corridor including the Astra Zeneca site, Brandywine Country Club, and Concord Plaza. Additional redevelopment of ageing commercial strip centers and consolidated parcels may also be considered.

7. Other Business

7:50 PM

None.

8. Adjournment

8:00 PM