

July 17, 2019

The Honorable Matthew S. Meyer  
New Castle County Executive  
New Castle Corporate Commons  
87 Reads Way  
New Castle, DE 19720

Mr. Meyer:

The *Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee* would like to applaud efforts of New Castle County in implementing the Route 9 Master Plan. In addition to beginning work on a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) project to support the Plan's vision of better walking and bicycling connectivity, the County's Land Use and Community Services Departments have recently funded a pair of initiatives that support community self-determination and development. We also reaffirm our commitment to work with the County on other necessary initiatives.

Led by the University of Delaware, a community-driven team developed and executed a survey of Hamilton Park and Eden Park residents about their perceptions of their local environment, their health, and attitudes to relocation. This fully transparent project funded by New Castle County empowered residents to shape their future. Our members were impressed by the openness of the survey's development, the tireless work on the street to reach and survey residents, and the thoroughness of the analysis results. We feel the community's voice was heard loud and clear – especially as it relates to their environmental, health, and quality of life concerns.

A second important effort involves the re-writing of DeIDOT construction contracts to support the hiring and training of local labor. We believe that local workers should help build DeIDOT's forthcoming projects along Route 9.

Along with improving the corridor's transportation network, providing construction jobs will help local workers learn new skills while earning a paycheck and increasing their future employability. In a broader view, this works to uplift local communities long plagued by high levels of unemployment and underemployment. To pursue this goal, the way DeIDOT's construction contracts are focused need to be changed. New clauses stipulating local hire requirements and/or incentives are needed. We are pleased the County saw the lasting value of this innovative initiative and stepped up to fund its execution.

The Monitoring Committee is committed to supporting these steps towards implementation of the Master Plan as we move forward. Other work too is necessary, which the County may be in the best position to spearhead, or to help us find the right lead. These are:

- **Conducting a “Mechanisms for Fair Community Relocation” study.** Called for in the Master Plan, this study is the next, logical step in detangling the knotty issue of neighborhood relocation. It would result in a playbook for how an equitable and fair future relocation could be pursued. We believe a consultant with successful experience in this arena will be necessary. Strong and continual resident engagement is also needed, which we pledge to facilitate. While the Hamilton Park and Eden Park neighborhoods would be the principal subject, this study would also inform any future relocations of communities.
- **Update the UDC and Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the land use and zoning recommendations in the Master Plan.** We believe these amendments should go into effect, even if the relocations of Hamilton Park and Eden Park have yet to be sorted out. There are other pressing zoning issues to resolve in the south of the Route 9 corridor – such as promoting mixed-use/mixed-income redevelopment around the Route 9 library and removing stray industrial parcels at and south of Rogers Road.

Additional steps we would like to work with the County on include:

- **Exploration of designating a Hometown Overlay Zone.** Community leaders have requested more information on beginning such a program, but the effort appears to be stalled.
- Understanding and working together on **economic development initiatives** – such as opportunity zones and downtown development districts – to drive revitalization of the Route 9 corridor.
- Efforts to **lessen the height and increase the covering of material piles** at industrial sites along and around the Route 9 corridor.
- Efforts to **reduce illegal truck traffic** on residential streets.
- **Implementation of the TAP project and walking and bicycling improvements** – especially those which connect neighborhoods – in the Master Plan. We are exploring the creation of a neighborhood paths plan to flesh out concepts in the Master Plan and the County would be a crucial partner.

The mission of the Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee is to help guide and fulfill the recommendations of the Master Plan, which established a shared vision for the transportation and land use redevelopment of the Route 9 corridor. This work will be accomplished through a collaborative dialogue between its membership, which includes implementing agencies, local civic and community leaders, other key stakeholders, and the communities they represent.

On behalf of the Monitoring Committee we want to thank New Castle County again for its efforts and involvement to date. We look forward to continuing our collaborative work as we move forward together. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



William Swiatek  
Principal Planner, WILMAPCO  
Chair, Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee