

August 24, 2021

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

Mr. Meyer:

On behalf of the Health Subcommittee of the Route 9 Master Plan's Monitoring Committee, we would like to reopen a discussion with New Castle County about improving lighting along the Tri-Park Trail, which links Dunleith to Oakmont, and improving lighting throughout the Route 9 corridor. Funding from a Healthy Communities Delaware award could have added lights along this trail, but the Parks Department demurred, citing concerns about increasing night-time activity within the park, which might increase area crime.

According to civic leaders, residents use the trail not just for recreation, but also as a transportation link between bus stops and their homes. These trips occur at various hours of daylight as workers return travel to and from their jobs. The function and benefit of this trail goes beyond what is typical of other county parks.

Research on the interplay between improved lighting and crime suggests that new lighting is a crime deterrent. According to the National Institute of Justice: “[By] improving street lighting, the offender is believed to perceive greater risks of apprehension, while residents are believed to invest more in their community and thus work to prevent crime in their community¹.” Studies have shown a 20% - 39% reduction of crime in areas of improved lighting².

The Route 9 Master Plan notes that proper lighting is critical to the success of walkways and other transportation facilities. The Plan calls for more pedestrian-scaled lighting to improve safety, efficiency, and beautification where appropriate. The need for improved lighting will be a recommendation in the forthcoming University of Delaware's Route 9 Health Assessment and WILMAPCO's Route 9 Paths Plan. These recommendations are grounded not only in research, but are also based on resident survey data, which consistently illustrates the need. According to more

¹ <https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedpractices/38#mao>

² <https://www.ledsmagazine.com/architectural-lighting/article/16701511/major-study-finds-outdoor-lighting-cut-crime-by-39>; <https://blogs.iadb.org/ideas-matter/en/how-better-ambient-and-street-lighting-reduces-crime/>; <https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedpractices/38#mao>

than 800 surveys from the New Castle Prevention Coalition, for example, 67% of residents report sparse lighting or no lighting at all.

The mission of the Route 9 Monitoring Committee's Health Subcommittee is to improve health outcomes for residents of the Route 9 corridor, principally by understanding and working to address the area's social determinants of health concerns. This will be accomplished through collaborative dialogue and action between its membership, which includes healthcare and government agencies, local civic and community leaders, other key stakeholders, and the communities they represent.

Our committee discussed a variety of potential funding sources at our meeting this month which could support this effort. We would like to continue that conversation with the County and coordinate on potential solutions.

We look forward to your support with this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. I can be reached at: bswiatek@wilmapco.org, or 302-737-6205 x113.

Sincerely,



Bill Swiatek, AICP
Chair of the Route 9 Monitoring Committee

CC: Councilman Jea Street
Marco Boyce, New Castle County
Kendall Somers, New Castle County
Phil McBride, New Castle County
Members of the Rt. 9 Health Subcommittee