

Route 9 Monitoring Committee Meeting Minutes

8/21/2018

An audio recording of this meeting is available at <http://www.wilmapco.org/Route9/>.

Attendees

- Marco Boyce, New Castle County Land Use
- Carrie Casey, New Castle County
- Carlos Dipres, First State Community Action Agency
- Caitlin DelCollo, Senate on behalf of Senator Henry
- Lauren Devore, DNREC
- Peter Haag, DeIDOT
- Mike Hahn, DeIDOT Planning
- James Johnson, State Representative
- Philip McBride, New Castle County Land Use
- Stephen Ottinger, Delaware Transit Corporation
- James Parker, Oakmont Civic Association
- Lawrence Pelham, Pastor of Coleman Memorial
- Jeanette Swain, Rose Hill Civic Association
- Bill Swiatek, WILMAPCO
- Jake Thompson, WILMAPCO

Minutes

- **[0:00:45 in recording]** The committee reviewed the previous meeting minutes.
 - There were no comments. The committee accepted the previous meeting minutes.
- **[0:02:45 in recording]** Bill Swiatek reviewed the mission and vision statements.
- **[0:04:00 in recording]** Bill Swiatek shared the results of the public survey that was conducted at the June 25 Public Workshop and the July 28 Health Hook Up Event in Dunlieth. Bill thanked Mike Hahn and Jeanette Swain for supporting the outreach at the Health Hook Up event. The results are shown on the last page of the meeting packet. Overall, both residents and non-residents supported the recommendations of the master plan. He said that we will continue to give the survey at future events.
 - James Parker asked if the people who were surveyed were willing to come to the meetings.
 - Bill Swiatek said that the results are a combination of different surveys at different events. Half of the people who took the survey were already attending the public workshop. As people walked out the door of the public workshop, people were asked to do the survey.
 - Lawrence Pelham asked if there was a brief, understandable overview of the master plan so that people know what it is about.
 - Bill Swiatek said that at the public workshop, there were three separate boards showing the major recommendations from the plan. As a result, everyone who

took the survey was familiar with the plan. Jeanette Swain agreed that everyone at the Health Hook Up event was familiar with what was being asked.

- **[0:13:15 in recording]** Peter Haag gave a presentation about roundabouts and road diets (http://www.wilmapco.org/Rt_9/Presentations/Aug2018/DelDOT_Roundabouts_Presentation.PDF). He played a video from DelDOT that explains how roundabouts work and their benefits (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RL7zqrLetEw>). He then explained how roundabouts operate.
- He showed a few examples of roundabouts, roundabouts near interstates, and traffic circles for comparison. Roundabouts are successful throughout the country and overseas. They reduce delay in some cases, calm traffic, can improve aesthetics, have reduced lifecycle costs, are easier for beginner and senior drivers, and provide safety benefits. Roundabouts have fewer conflict points. They eliminate left-turn and right-angle conflicts. They also drastically reduce severe crash injuries.
- Roundabouts take up less land than traditional intersections. Roundabouts require more right-of-way at corners, but less at approaches due to not needing turn lanes. DelDOT currently maintains 16 roundabouts. Regarding public relations, roundabouts are relatively new to Delaware, sometimes opposed during planning and design, and often applauded after construction. The design of a roundabout involves approach alignment, drainage, signage/stripping, and lighting. Publications and web resources are listed to provide more information on roundabouts.
- He then showed comparisons between the proposed roundabouts along Route 9 and the intersections' current designs. He also showed Level of Service comparisons between current conditions, future conditions if the roundabouts are not built, and future conditions if the roundabouts are built.
 - James Parker asked how emergency responders would be able to control traffic in a roundabout.
 - Peter Haag said that authorized personnel, such as police officers, could direct traffic through a roundabout in the event of an emergency. They could also direct traffic in the case of a special event that might have high traffic levels.
 - James Parker asked how the roundabout directly off of the bridge would be able to handle the traffic in the area.
 - James Johnson said that it is a bigger problem at Cherry Lane than at Memorial Drive.
 - Jeannette Swain said that her understanding was that the roundabout would be Terminal Avenue and not at Memorial Drive.
 - Bill Swiatek said that there are three proposed roundabouts: Cherry Lane, Terminal Avenue, and Memorial Drive. Regarding congestion, he said non-recurring congestion will go down as a result of reduced crashes. Regarding traffic flow, at Cherry Lane and Memorial Drive, based on 2036 traffic projections, both intersections performed better with the roundabouts than without.
 - Lawrence Pelham said that he was sold on roundabouts, but he heard comments concerning whether DelDOT got the data right to determine if the roundabouts can handle the traffic in the area. He also suggested explaining what the data is trying to convey in simpler terms.
 - Mike Hahn said he could ask his staff to verify the traffic modeling data for the roundabouts. He said that he and Bill Swiatek reviewed the presentation and

- thought it might be too technical, and DelDOT would have to simplify the information to make it more understandable to a broader audience.
 - Carrie Casey asked if pedestrian traffic was considered in the traffic analysis.
 - Bill Swiatek said yes, pedestrian traffic was considered. The project will improve pedestrian access and safety because it slows traffic, provides improved crossings, and adds a multi-use path in the median that is protected from traffic.
 - JJ Johnson said that roundabouts could encourage truck drivers to take a different route, which might impact traffic.
 - Mike Hahn said that while trucks are coming from all directions in the area, they are largely obligated to be on Route 9 due to the location of interstate ramps, so they would still have to use the roundabouts.
 - Bill Swiatek said another project, the Pigeon Point Road Extension, would provide an alternate route to keep trucks off of Route 9 and out of neighborhoods.
 - James Parker asked how pedestrians would be able to cross at roundabouts if they are designed to keep traffic moving.
 - Mike Hahn said that at these intersections, there are not high pedestrian volumes which would require considering pedestrian movement by having a queue in the signal cycle. The roundabouts are designed in a way that drivers would have to look out for pedestrians and yield to them when they are crossing.
 - Carlos Dipres said that at Route 9 and Memorial Drive, there is a bus stop just north of the intersection. He asked how traffic would be able to flow with buses stopping.
 - Mike Hahn said that a hybrid roundabout is proposed at this intersection, which would have additional lanes that would accommodate buses.
- **[1:28:00 in recording]** Peter Haag gave a presentation about the proposed road diet on Memorial Drive (www.wilmapco.org/Rt_9/Presentations/Aug2018/DelDOT_MemorialDrive_Presentation.PDF). The road diet would cover approximately one mile in length, from Route 9 to Route 13. The road would be converted from two lanes to one lane in each direction, maintaining on-street parking and adding bike lanes. Some intersections along the corridor have significant pedestrian traffic crossing the roadway. Currently, there are no significant traffic operational issues. Crash data showed that there were 37 total crashes along the corridor from April 2015 to April 2018. The design of the road diet took into consideration many factors, including crash history, traffic volumes, transit stops, on-street parking, pedestrian crossing distances, turn lane feasibility, utility pole locations, the center median, and FHWA road diet guidelines. Memorial Drive has significantly less than 20,000 vehicles per day, so it is suitable for a road diet. Benefits of road diets include slower speeds, added bike facilities, shorter pedestrian crossing distances, and no changes to traffic operations at adjacent signalized intersections, and the proposal is consistent with the Route 9 Corridor Master Plan.
 - Bill Swiatek said that the idea for this project came out of a Walkable Community Workshop in 2012 that started at the Garfield Park Recreation Center. It is also supported by the ongoing Safe Routes to School project at McCullough Middle School. For people living on the other side of Memorial Drive, the road serves as a barrier as it is difficult and dangerous to cross. The proposals in the plan are intended to calm traffic and make it safer to cross.
 - Mike Hahn said that this is a low-budget interim measure. There is a greater plan for pedestrian crossings, additional landscaping, and other changes. After the interim

measure is implemented, it will be measurable to determine its benefits to the community.

- Peter Haag said that the earliest it can be completed is fiscal year 2021, or potentially as early as next year. The biggest hurdle is public involvement. He said that for a project of this type, DelDOT would likely hold a public workshop or virtual workshop to talk about this specific location.
- Carlos Dipres said that there are multiple neighborhoods and civic organizations along the corridor, and they would all have to be involved in public engagement.
 - Bill Swiatek said that we could invite everyone from each of those civic organizations, as well as advertising the workshop in the area. People could come in, look at the boards, and have one-on-one conversations with DelDOT staff.
 - Peter Haag said that the intent of the public workshop is to present boards showing different areas of the project. JMT, the consultant that put together the road diet presentation, is assigned to creating the design plans for this project. They would be on-site to answer questions and collect feedback.
- Carlos Dipres said that one of the community's biggest complaints is that people don't know what's happening, but if we advertise a public workshop and people don't come, it's their loss.
 - James Parker said that people see these projects won't be built until years in the future, and they think nothing's happening.
 - Mike Hahn said that we can explain that projects will be in the design phase before they are constructed, provided that we keep the explanation simple. He said that we also have Safe Routes to School projects. He said that there is a lot of stuff happening, just not major construction projects like roundabouts and reconfiguring intersections.
 - Bill Swiatek said that we could hold a standalone workshop at the Garfield Park Recreation Center or have it as part of the All Civics meeting, if possible.
 - Carlos suggested the Route 9 Library. There was agreement in having it at the Route 9 Library.
 - Mike Hahn said that workshops often have lukewarm attendance, and afterwards we get phone calls from representatives' offices saying the community wants to know what's going on. Because DelDOT has a public outreach process, we'll have a public workshop and put the boards up online. He said that virtual workshops are very good because they explain what the boards are intended to convey.
 - Bill Swiatek said that in terms of promotion, you have to work through the civic associations.
 - Mike Hahn said that you can plan for the workshop in the next few months, but the projects won't be scheduled for the next few years, so people will forget about them.
 - Bill Swiatek said that there is no rush, and we could hold a workshop in the spring.
 - James Parker said that at all of the Monitoring Committee meetings, we have been talking about Route 9 and roundabouts, but now Memorial Drive is a new topic. He said that probably should have been the focus. He said he would have gotten more people from Overview Gardens and Garfield Park to the meeting because they would know more about Memorial Drive.

- Bill Swiatek said that we will continue talking about it, possibly at the next meeting. He said that there is a lot in the Master Plan, and it is news that DeIDOT will be moving forward with the project. Otherwise, we would have discussed it sooner.
- **[1:57:00 in recording]** Marco Boyce shared the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) project. He handed out a map of revised TAP project locations in the Route 9 area (http://www.wilmapco.org/Rt_9/Meetings/Route9_TAP_RevisedLocationsMap.jpg). The program provides funding and project construction and design dollars for projects that can't compete with large capital projects, such as Route 9. TAP projects are funded by a local match. In this case, the local match would be from New Castle County. Local government contributes 20% of funding, and the state and federal government contributes 80%. The cap is \$1 million per phase.
- The TAP program could cover lighting, landscaping, and safety improvements. This started with the Walkable Community Workshop. This was revisited after WILMAPCO did prioritization, and Route 9 moved to the top of the list. This past spring, we did another walk through. The projects were ranked. The next step is in late winter or early spring, DeIDOT will hold public workshops to share conceptual designs to confirm if the community would find these solutions acceptable. On Morehouse Drive, there are warehouses on both sides. These are not considered an appropriate gateway into the neighborhood. The entrance would be improved from a pedestrian and beautification standpoint. The roadway would be realigned and made more hospitable for pedestrians and bikes. In addition, the connection between the Route 9 Library and the Rose Hill Community Center would be improved.
 - Mike Hahn said that DeIDOT would take a look at these locations in conceptual stages. They would then put together cost estimates to help schedule and prioritize projects.
 - Carlos Dipres said one of the community's concerns is whether local people can bid if a job is being done in the area. He said now they need to get organized and understanding the bidding process, so three years would be enough time to have a workshop on how to bid for a state contract.
 - James Parker asked if all seven projects would be up for bid.
 - Marco Boyce said probably not. He said that these types of applications will be phased out over time, so depending on cost estimates they might stop at three or four projects. Another phase might cover a few more projects. It depends on how much the solutions cost, and that is what the planning process is for.
 - Bill Swiatek asked when to expect New Castle County to come back with an update.
 - Marco Boyce said that we can expect an update when we hear from Mike Hahn's supervisor to do a kickoff.
 - Mike Hahn said that DeIDOT will set up the conceptual planning funding, which is the state's participation.
- **[2:11:35 in recording]** Steve Ottinger shared an update on the Community Conversation held by Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC) at the Route 9 Library on August 14. Some of the major topics included simplifying the bus route structure, reallocating service to increase ridership, building through routes or combo routes, creating transit corridors (areas where there are heavy concentrations of bus ridership), locating bus stops to have direct pedestrian access, encouraging active transportation, and making transit a priority. At the event, they displayed a couple of boards. DTC CEO John Sisson said that they will have more community conversations to hear from the public, including in the Route 9 area. There will be press releases talking about

what will be changed. On September 18th, they will be held at the Route 9 Library in the multipurpose room, at the same time as the Route 9 Monitoring Committee meeting.

- Jeannette Swain asked if there are plans to install trash cans at bus stops.
 - Steve Ottinger said he is not aware of any plans right now, but that is an easy shoe-in, and he will follow up.
- Caitlin DelCollo said she put a comment in the suggestion box at that meeting to create an “adopt a stop” program.
 - Steve Ottinger said that DTC has something like that. The program has faded away a bit, as there were issues that people were donating bus shelters, but the maintenance and cleaning often fell away. DTC was trying to reorganize that, but the program still exists. If there are communities that are interesting in cleaning or putting in shelters, DTC is able to work with them.
- James Parker asked if people would help build bus shelters or just clean them.
 - Steve Ottinger said the thought is that there are upfront costs going into it; it has to be ADA accessible and be able to withstand damage. In this economy, DTC has a shortage of drivers and shelter cleaners and everything else. If DTC has more of a community buy-in, that can help facilitate stop maintenance.
- James Parker asked if there is a shortage of people to hire or if people have been laid off.
 - Steve Ottinger said DTC currently has shelter cleaners cleaning the shelters at least once a week, but in this county they only have 5 or 6 shelter cleaners.
 - James Parker asked if there is a shortage because DTC needs people to work there.
 - Steve Ottinger said DTC is always hiring drivers, cleaners, and other positions.
 - James Parker said that could be an incentive for community members to buy into the program if they could get a job.
 - Steve Ottinger said one of the positive outcomes of the community conversation was that to show more community engagement, DTC should hire more people from the community.
- **[2:23:15 in recording]** Bill Swiatek gave brief updates on other topics. The Outreach Subcommittee has not met. Regarding the OJT Subcommittee, there was a suggestion from the Monitoring Committee at the last meeting that New Castle County step in to support the effort. The County, however, has decided that this is beyond their scope and has deferred to DeIDOT. For the hometown overlay, he hasn’t heard anything and doesn’t know if work is proceeding. The Eden/Hamilton Park Survey is in process and will be wrapped up by the end of August.
 - Carrie Casey said that the survey results will be analyzed and are expected to be released in October.
- The next Monitoring Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 18 at 4:30 pm in the Scriptorium of the Route 9 Library.