

Spring 2019

Quarterly newsletter of the Wilmington Area Planning Council **TRANSPORTER**

WILMAPCO

WILMAPCO Reboots Social Equity Analysis

A major update to our social equity report has begun. The new Transportation Justice (TJ) Plan, expected to be completed this fall, will consider the mobility needs of several groups that too often encounter challenges with our transportation planning process or transportation system.

Some populations benefit more from our transportation system than others. About five in 10 of our region's low-income residents, for example, experience at least some difficulty traveling day-to-day. The same is true for only about one in 10 of high-income residents. Meanwhile, ethnic and racial minorities are often underrepresented in our planning processes and are less familiar with WILMAPCO.

The TJ Plan will consider the needs of several different populations, each of whom have documented mobility and/or public involvement challenges: our racial and ethnic minority communities, people with low incomes, people with disabilities, seniors, households without vehicles, female-headed households with children, people with limited English proficiency, and people with low literacy.

The TJ report will include extensive technical analyses of our

transportation system. We will look at how equitably transportation funds are spent in minority and low-income communities and how well connected these places are to key destinations (such as supermarkets and low-wage employment centers) by walking, biking, car, and bus. Other planned analyses include connectivity from age-restricted communities, refining the region's "food deserts," and identifying neighborhoods where many people struggle with reading or comprehending written English.

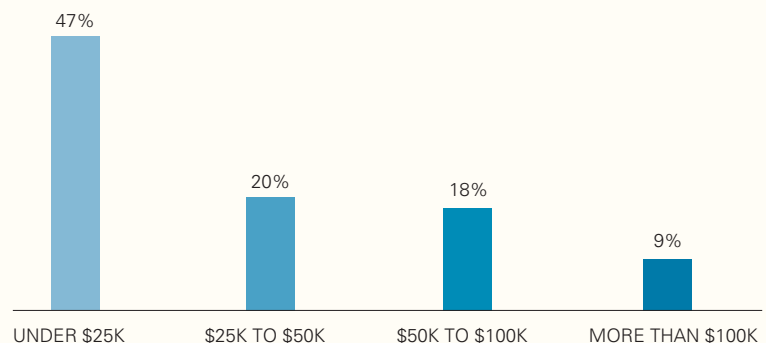
The report will also make several recommendations for improving our public engagement practices. Staff will be reviewing best practices to support closing known gulfs in project participation by race and class.

One key aspect of the plan will be a language assistance chapter. Here, we will outline a plan to better support Spanish and Chinese speakers who do not speak English very well, along with all those who do not read or write English well, and to better engage them in WILMAPCO's planning processes.

The TJ report is being guided by a working group comprised of representatives from: Delaware and Maryland Departments of Transportation, DART First State, University of Delaware, and members of our Public Advisory Committee.

If you would like to learn more, please get in touch or visit www.wilmapco.org/ej.

Transportation Keeps Me From Activities at Least Sometimes, by Annual Household Income





RTP Outreach Breaks New Ground

WILMAPCO's 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) has been approved. The RTP sets out the broad vision and goals for transportation in the WILMAPCO region and identifies the shorter-term projects that seek to make that vision a reality. A document of this importance needs to be developed through an extensive public outreach process, and WILMAPCO has done just that.

Typically, for RTP outreach, we conduct a statistically-valid telephone opinion survey, present to more than 40 municipal and civic groups, hold public workshops and events, publish press releases and other news articles, conduct radio interviews, and promote our efforts on social media. For this

iteration of the RTP, we wanted to go further.

To help achieve our outreach goals, we received a federal grant. The funds allowed us to use Metroquest Public Outreach Software to create a compelling survey designed to reach a diverse audience. The survey was completed by 592 people and resulted in more than 500 comments. The survey asked respondents to rate the goals and objectives of the 2050 RTP, and at least 4 (out of 5) points were given for all of the goals and objectives, demonstrating strong support for the fundamentals of the plan.

Respondents were also asked to prioritize different types of

transportation investment. In line with our "Preservation First" policy, most support was received for maintaining our existing infrastructure (24%) as opposed to building new roadways (9%). Public transportation was the next most supported funding category (23%).

In addition to the Metroquest survey, we held a Virtual Public Workshop. The workshop was attended by 75 people and included a presentation, electronic polling, Q&A, and a collaborative white-board activity that yielded many needed projects. We also held several in-person pop-up workshops at train stations, libraries, community centers, and YMCAs, reaching nearly 150 people and yielding an

additional 140 comments. The pop-ups offered a low-tech, in-person version of the Metroquest survey.

What we heard

In our Metroquest survey, we heard some conflicting messages. For example, many feel that too much money is being spent on walking and biking, compared with the percentages of those who are walking and biking. At the same time, many also commented that more money should be spent on improving the safety and making better connections for those who want to walk and bike. One thing most agreed on is that walking and biking isn't as

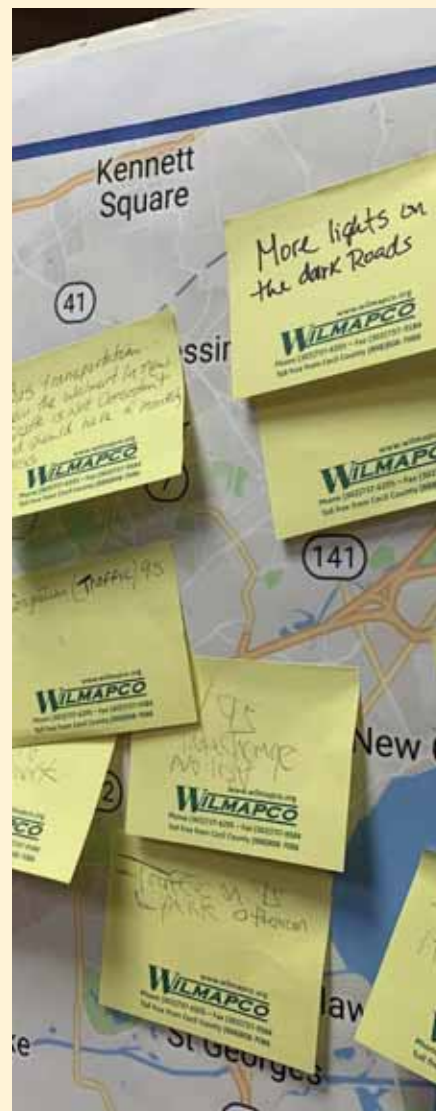
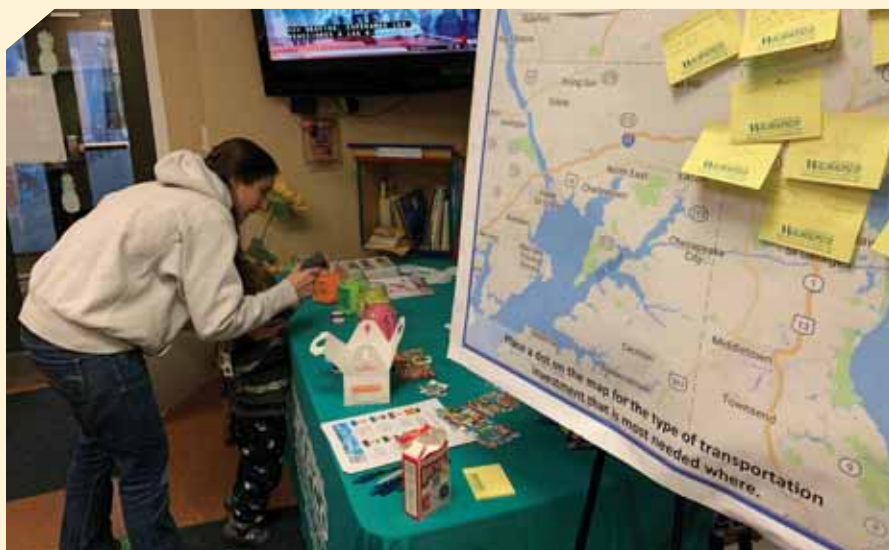
safe as it should be, particularly in New Castle County. Many folks also requested more funding for public transit, both rail and bus. Many feel we need more frequent, earlier, later, and weekend service in order to make transit a viable option, and that the current transit system is unjust for those who are dependent on it and do not own a vehicle.

Similar to the Metroquest survey, during our popup workshops, the most commonly heard comment was the desire for more bus service. Many complained that I-95 is too congested and that there are too many potholes. We

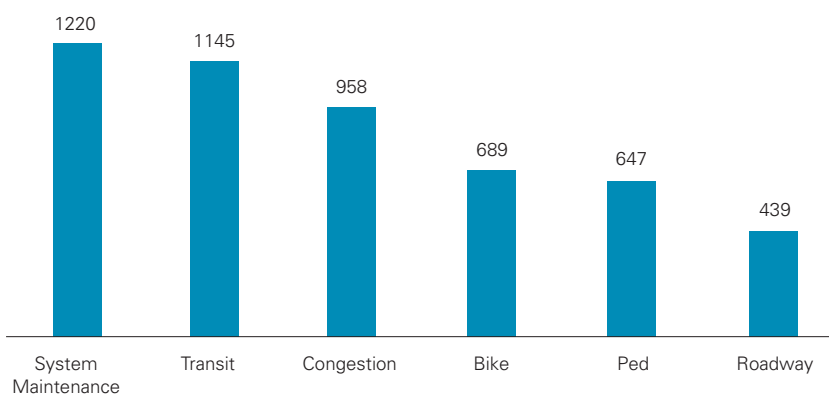
received many suggestions for needed safety improvements, particularly lighting at train stations and bus stops. Many residents express a desire for more parking at train stations, and for MARC and SEPTA train services to connect, something WILMAPCO has been working toward for years.

All of the comments received were presented to WILMAPCO's Council, which voted to approve the 2050 RTP this past March.

For more information, please visit www.wilmapco.org/rtp.



Metroquest Funding Priorities





WILMAPCO's 2019 Our Town: Planning for Tomorrow

Nichole Majeski, Deputy Transportation Secretary at the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), provided opening remarks at WILMAPCO's Our Town: Planning for Tomorrow. The event was held on February 7, 2019, at the University of Delaware STAR Campus.

"DelDOT and all of our partners are working together on transportation," she said. "The decisions we make impact how the entire transportation network works. They help create stronger economies and improved quality of life for our residents. It is an exciting time in transportation because of DelDOT's evolving technologies, which include two autonomous vehicles that will be driving around the University of Delaware campus."

The Our Town event drew 100 attendees and featured keynote speaker Beth Osborne from Washington, DC's Transportation for America, who was introduced by Edward O'Donnell, Senior Fellow of the University of Delaware. The event also featured a panel of transportation officials followed by a Q&A session.

Ms. Osborne focused her keynote address on planning. "We are talking about planning for the future, but it also occurs to me that we don't have a good grip on what the present holds," she said. She referred to a National Association of Realtors survey where homeowners were asked if residents would give up some space in their homes for a shorter or more convenient commute. The majority of the respondents replied yes. She further explained that as generations have shifted, homes have become smaller, and only about 20% of housing is occupied by nuclear families.

From a Delaware State Housing Authority study, Ms. Osborne learned the housing supply does not match the housing demand. In the Philadelphia region, there is an increasing demand for rentals. An increasing senior population, combined with a growing younger population, has driven this trend.

Ms. Osborne also discussed the growing incidental costs of building new houses, such as costs for building roadways, transit, fire and police protection, sewage, water,

broadband, garbage pick-up, and schools. She added that the core values of businesses have also changed; American companies want the same things as residents, and businesses are moving downtown. "If you are looking to attract business, business is following talent. Talent is moving to places where they don't have to spend their entire life in a car," she said.

Ms. Osborne later asked, "How do we redesign our program to deal with the fact that the world has changed?" She answered, "One thing we can do is to measure the right things." She continued, "We measure work and non-work trips very differently. A 30-minute commute for business is considered normal; however, a 30-minute trip to the grocery is considered a food desert."

She concluded, "If we can make sure the projects that we are building are matching the outcomes of our objectives, we would see a much tighter connection between what we are building and what people want, and that is how we can get our arms around planning for the future."

Panel discussions provide plan updates

Opening the panel discussions, Bill Swiatek, WILMAPCO Principal Planner, presented highlights from WILMAPCO's 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which was out for public comment until March 6, 2019.

He said the three main goals in WILMAPCO's RTP are: 1) Support Sustainable Economic Development; 2) Improve Quality of Life; and 3) Efficiently Transport People. The RTP also has 114 funded projects; however, an additional 87 projects have no funding.

Drew Boyce, DelDOT Director of Planning, said, "DelDOT's Transportation Plan, 'Innovation in Motion,' is a policy-based plan that does not list projects." It includes 10 goals with many transportation elements. One of DelDOT's main goals is keeping Delaware in a state of good repair. Other priorities are Smyrna's new transit system, bicycle and pedestrian coordination with land use patterns, freight movement that includes logistics that are changing, and partnering with the University of Delaware on new training and maintenance of aircraft. He said DelDOT has recently completed an economic assessment that indicated "aviation brings in more than \$1 billion to the state."

Heather Murphy, Director of the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) Office of Planning and Capital Programming, said the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) is also a state policy plan that includes multi-modal transportation. In the plan, Maryland's diverse cultures are shown in four key areas with different transportation needs: 1) Baltimore-Metro; 2) Western; 3) Southern; and 4) Eastern Shore. She

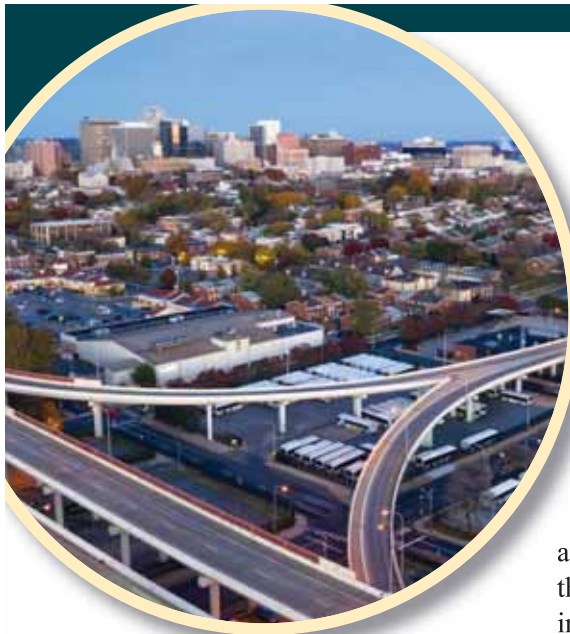
highlighted the I-95 Belvedere Road widening project in Cecil County, which had received funding from a grant. The project opens up that area for jobs and development. She added, "Because of increased congestion, MDOT is also looking toward the future at a possible new Bay Bridge and a Transit Center in Ocean City."

Richard Hall, General Manager in the Department of Land Use, New Castle County, talked about the county's Comprehensive Plan Update, which must be updated every 10 years and evaluated every five years. The proposed 2022 Comprehensive Plan adopts key components of WILMAPCO master plans. These include the Northern Claymont Master Plan, Route 9 Corridor Master Plan, Southern New Castle County Master Plan, and Concord Pike Master Plan.

The last panelist, Herb Inden, Director of the Department of Planning and Development at the City of Wilmington, spoke about the City's 2028 Comprehensive Plan. He said public outreach strategies used in the plan included in-person and online community surveys, public forums, and focus groups. Participants reported their top priorities are safety, a vibrant city with things to do, and an easy city to get around in, with abundant economic opportunities. Participants also explored the question, "What is a great street?" Market Street in Wilmington was cited as the best example of a great street.

For more information regarding WILMAPCO's Our Town event and to view the speakers' presentations, please visit www.wilmapco.org/ourtown.





New Study Aims to Better Connect Downtown, Riverfront, I-95

In 2018, the Wilmington Initiatives Partners submitted a request for WILMAPCO to lead a new study that would pick up where the last study ended and carry it through to completion. The first tasks in the new study include collecting current traffic data and street conditions, and reviewing the previous alternatives. These include restoration of the street grid to remove the 5-Point Intersection. It also includes proposals to reconfigure the I-95 exit ramp connection to Maryland Avenue. There are options to reconfigure, relocate, and expand Delaware Transit Corporation's (DTC) Fixed Route Bus Operations Center, and proposed changes to

Delmarva Power's customer and employee parking lots.

An Advisory Committee will be created to help guide the study, which will also include focus groups and public workshops. This study will review the existing plans while factoring in changes to current travel patterns and volumes, as well as recent changes to DTC's Paratransit operations and maintenance locations. The study will provide the designs for necessary roadway improvements to reduce congestion and make the area more bicycle and pedestrian friendly.

You can follow the progress of the study at

www.wilmapco.org/wilmingtoninitiatives.

More than 10 years ago, the Wilmington Initiatives Partners (City of Wilmington, DelDOT, Delaware Transit Corporation, and WILMAPCO) began developing concepts to improve access to Wilmington's Central Business District from the I-95 exit ramp at Maryland Avenue to Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Boulevard. The existing intersection is a conversion of five road segments at a key gateway into and out of Wilmington's Riverfront. In Summer 2008, S. Madison Street, between MLK Boulevard and West Street, became two-way, which added another signal phase to this intersection that was already experiencing a low Level of Service (LOS) and was difficult for pedestrians to navigate. Frequent congestion of the intersection during the morning commute can often cause traffic backups and congestion on the exit ramp from I-95 to Maryland Avenue, even extending onto the highway travel lanes, creating safety concerns on I-95. Design alternatives for improvements were developed to enhance safety and capacity along the Maryland Avenue and MLK Boulevard corridors. Unfortunately, this project never moved forward and conditions have remained unchanged.



Interns Provide Critical Support on WILMAPCO's Projects

WILMAPCO works in partnership with the University of Delaware and others to provide intern opportunities for students. We currently have three students working with us.



Kelicia Dix



Matt Federbusch



Joanna Ridley

Kelicia Dix is a Civil Engineering student at Delaware Technical Community College. A love of math and science led her to the path of engineering. Kelicia grew up near Wilmington and New Castle and has resided in Delaware her whole life. In the future, she would like to finish her bachelor's degree at the University of Delaware and start her own engineering firm. At WILMAPCO, she is working on creating maps that bring attention to social injustices in our region for the upcoming update of WILMAPCO's Transportation Justice Report.

Matt Federbusch, a senior Civil Engineering major at the University of Delaware, started working at WILMAPCO in June 2018 as a summer intern. Matt has contributed to key traffic assessment projects in New Castle County, such as helping with travel-time reliability analyses and critical movement summation reports. Matt has also learned about Geographic Information Systems (GIS) programs, which help display traffic data in a map format. The experiences and skills he's learned at WILMAPCO have solidified his interest in the transportation field.

Joanna Ridley is currently majoring in Civil Engineering at the University of Delaware. She's been an intern for WILMAPCO since the beginning of 2019 and has started assisting with a Signal Timing Project run by Professor Rusty Lee at the University of Delaware. With no definitive plans for the future, Joanna is hoping to delve into transportation engineering, exploring and growing her newfound interest in the field. This goal is helped by the many projects at WILMAPCO, including analyzing US 202 intersection improvements, completing Level of Service (LOS) analysis, researching changes in vehicles per household, and mapping non-motorized pathways.



WILMINGTON AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800
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(302) 737-6205

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WILMAPCO PUBLIC MEETINGS

Unless specified, meetings will be held at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, Delaware. Your participation at these meetings is appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact us at (302) 737-6205 or toll free from Cecil County at (888) 808-7088. **During inclement weather, please call to verify meetings.**

MAY	JUNE	JULY
May 9, 10 a.m. Air Quality Subcommittee	June 4, 3 p.m. Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group	July 11, 10 a.m. Air Quality Subcommittee
May 9, 4 p.m. WILMAPCO Council	June 13, 10 a.m. Air Quality Subcommittee	July 11, 4 p.m. WILMAPCO Council
May 16, 10 a.m. Technical Advisory Committee	June 17, 6 p.m. Public Advisory Committee	July 18, 10 a.m. Technical Advisory Committee
	June 20, 10 a.m. Technical Advisory Committee	



MAY IS NATIONAL BIKE MONTH!

FRIDAY, MAY 17 IS BIKE TO WORK DAY.

LEARN ABOUT LOCAL BIKE MONTH EVENTS AT WWW.WILMAPCO.ORG/BIKEMONTH.