

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
October 17, 2024

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, October 17, 2024, at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, DE 19713 and via video conference/conference call.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Cooper Bowers, from Delaware Department of Transportation, and TAC Chair, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

2. TAC Members present:

Cooper Bowers, Delaware Department of Transportation
Samantha Bulkilvish, Delaware Office of State Planning
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning
Taylor Englert, Department of Natural Resources and Environment
Michael Fortner, City of Newark
William Goldman, Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning
Dan Janousek, Maryland Department of Transportation
Gwineth Kaminsky Rivera, City of Wilmington Planning
Quinn Krenzel, Town of Elkton Planning
Matthew Rodgers, New Castle County Department of Land Use
Catherine Salarano, Maryland Department of the Environment
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

TAC Ex-Officio Members present:

TAC Members absent:

City of Wilmington Department of Public Works
Delaware Division of Small Business, Development, and Tourism
Delaware River and Bay Authority
Maryland State Highway Administration

TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:

Amtrak
Diamond State Port Corporation
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Federal Highway Administration
U.S. Federal Transit Administration

Guests and Invitees:

Philip Barnes, University of Delaware
Robert Bullock, PAC member
Jane Dilley, Public
Sibtay Haider, Maryland Transit Administration
Calaia Jackson, University of Delaware
Pam Keeney, DNREC, AQS member
Tina Merrill, DNREC, AQS Member
Steven Miller, Maryland Transit Administration

Staff:

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner
Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
Sharen Elcock, Executive Assistant
Elizabeth Espinal, Administrative Assistant
Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner
Jake Thompson, Principal Planner
Dawn Voss, Outreach Coordinator
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Espinal.

3. MINUTES

Approval of the September 19, 2024, TAC Meeting Minutes.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Matthew Rogers and seconded by Mr. David Dahlstrom, the September 19th, 2024, TAC Minutes are approved.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

a. Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group: Mr. Dave Gula shared an update of the recent Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group (NMTWG) meeting, which he staffed. The first presentation, delivered by Mr. Dan Blevins, focused on bike and pedestrian improvements within the Churchmans Crossing and Kirkwood Highway areas and how these projects are interlinked. Mr. Blevins highlighted progress in the Churchmans Crossing monitoring study, showcasing substantial bike and pedestrian advancements made since the initial study, and provided updates on related improvements along Kirkwood Highway. Participants had questions regarding the data sources used, especially for Kirkwood, as it is expected to be beneficial for other projects. Mr. Blevins also noted that Churchmans Crossing is helping bridge gaps in the NC County trail network and addressed inquiries about whether the Churchmans initiative includes planned work on Salem Church Road.

For the second presentation, staff introduced the Rocky Run study, a new project in this year's UPWP. Although this project is not currently part of the first/final mile network, attendees expressed interest due to its unique scope, differing from typical WILMAPCO projects.

Finally, Mr. Gula announced an upcoming Open Streets event on Saturday, the 19th, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Baynard Blvd.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

ACTION ITEMS

6. To recommend amendment of the FY2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Ms. Heather Dunigan introduced a TIP amendment requested by the Maryland Department of Transportation requesting to allocate design funds for the MARC Elkton Train Station, a project

that the community has long advocated for. Mr. Dan Janousek, representing the Office of Planning, Programming, and Project Delivery (OPPD), detailed the amendment, which would add approximately \$424,849 in federal 5337 funds and around \$113,000 in matching funds. These funds, allocated under FY22's State of Good Repair formula, are slated for use in FY25. The project includes the design of high-level platforms, canopies, grade-separated access between platforms, and other station amenities to support the extension of MARC service to Elkton.

Mr. Steven Miller from Maryland Transit Administration added that this TIP amendment allows them to finalize the project. Though they are obligating FY22 funds in FY25 per FTA guidance, design work on the station began in March 2023 and is currently at the 30% completion stage. The project team has worked in collaboration with WILMAPCO and the City of Elkton, identifying a potential property for the station and awaiting directions on next steps.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. David Dahlstrom and seconded by Mr. Matthew Rodgers, the TAC recommends amending the FY2025-2028 TIP.

7. To recommend amendment of the FY2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Ms. Heather Dunigan presented this action item requesting approval for a significant amendment to align various projects with fiscal constraints in the TIP, as mandated by the CTP to match DelDOT's Operating Budget.

Ms. Dunigan explained the color coding used to highlight changes, with red underlined and cross marks for new or removed projects.

Ms. Dunigan noted that the draft sent to TAC includes some project and funding errors that will be corrected ahead of the Council review. Amendments are required to ensure the TIP remains fiscally constrained.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Michael Fortner and seconded by Ms. Gwinneeth Kaminsky, the TAC recommends amending the FY 2025-2028 TIP.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

8. Equity in Delaware Capital Expenditure Research

Dr. Phillip Barnes, a faculty member at the Biden School at the University of Delaware, introduced recent research on transportation equity in Delaware. He was joined by Dr. Calia Jackson, a research assistant and doctoral candidate, who contributed to this project. Dr. Barnes thanked WILMAPCO and DelDOT for the opportunity to present their findings, which have significant implications for transportation planning in Delaware.

The research, supported by the SMARTER Center, examined how transportation equity is conceptualized and implemented in Delaware's capital expenditure processes. SMARTER (Sustainable Mobility and Accessibility Regional Transportation Equity Research Centers) is a federally funded consortium of regional universities focused on issues of transportation sustainability, accessibility, and equity. The research team, which also included Dr. Andrea Pierce, conducted this work during the first year of a five-year funding period.

The study aimed to address two primary questions: first, how personnel at DeIDOT and related planning agencies conceptualize the term "transportation equity," and second, how this concept is reflected in Delaware's capital expenditures. This qualitative study sought broad insights into these areas, rather than delving into detailed financial or spatial analyses. Additionally, the study concentrated on capital expenditures, as opposed to operational spending.

Key findings included:

1. Interviewees broadly conceptualized equity as encompassing fair share, inclusivity, and social justice, emphasizing geographic distribution, stakeholder involvement, non-driver support, access for all users, and prioritizing marginalized communities.
2. Five mechanisms were identified as influential in operationalizing equity:
 - Federal mandates, such as Title VI and ADA, include explicit equity guidelines, while some funding programs emphasize equity, such as the RAISE grants.
 - MPOs like WILMAPCO prioritize equity in planning and project identification through community engagement.
 - DeIDOT's GIS-based tool identifies Equity Focus Areas (EFAs) based on factors like income, race, and language isolation. DeIDOT is currently evaluating how best to apply this tool in practice.
 - DeIDOT integrates equity into project prioritization, like or better than many MPOs across the United States.
 - DeIDOT also offers contracting support to minority-owned businesses, fostering equity in contracting.
3. The study found alignment between high-level equity concepts of fair share, inclusivity, and social justice and DeIDOT's operational mechanisms.

Despite DeIDOT's progress in embedding equity considerations, challenges remain. Interviewees noted a lack of clear definitions for transportation equity, which complicates its implementation. Furthermore, barriers to equitable planning include a need for improved data and difficulties in reaching underrepresented communities. These insights will guide the second year of research, which will expand to assess DOT efforts across the region to engage and amplify the voices of marginalized populations early in the transportation planning process.

Dr. Barnes concluded by noting that the full report is currently under review by the SMARTER Center and will be available publicly in the coming month.

Mr. Rob Bullock, representing Holloway Terrace and the Route 9 Monitoring Committee, requested a copy of the questionnaire used in the research presentation. Dr. Phillip Barnes clarified that the study involved targeted interviews rather than a formal questionnaire. Mr. Bullock, also affiliated with the Delaware Concerned for Environmental Justice and the Environmental Justice Health Alliance for Chemical Policy, expressed concern that his community had not received information about the study. He requested that Dr. Barnes send any related materials, especially the interview questions, so he could share them with his community. Dr. Barnes responded that the interview questions would be included in the final report and offered to send Mr. Bullock a copy upon release. He emphasized that the interview sample consisted of State and MPO staff.

Mr. Bullock shared his contact information and noted his positive experience participating in an interview, where he shared insights based on his community work in areas affected by environmental justice issues. Dr. Barnes reiterated that the report would feature anonymous quotes from interviewees, providing perspectives on transportation equity within their professional roles. He invited further questions via email.

Mr. Bill Swiatek raised a point about the importance of weighting project prioritization criteria, emphasizing that the number of equity factors alone may not fully capture their impact. Dr. Barnes acknowledged this, noting that although their research did not evaluate the weights assigned to equity criteria, recent discussions within DelDOT suggest a proposal to increase the weighting of equity factors in project prioritization, pending approval by the Council on Transportation.

9. Rocky Run Underpass Feasibility Study

Mr. Dave Gula provided an update on the Rocky Run Underpass Feasibility Study, a project initiated from a previous WILMAPCO study under the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee. The original study identified various corridor goals, including enhancing multimodal transportation and promoting pedestrian and bicycle-friendly spaces along Concord Pike. The high traffic volume and complex intersections in this area make it challenging for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate, and there is significant public demand for improvements.

To assess the feasibility of an underpass, community surveys were conducted, revealing support for "low stress" connections for pedestrians and cyclists. While traffic congestion is a primary concern, 82% of respondents indicated they would accept minor delays for safer pedestrian crossings, highlighting the community's interest in both safety and alternative transportation options.

The underpass concept involves several challenges. The existing culvert beneath Concord Pike currently supports roadway infrastructure and water flow from Rocky Run Creek. A proposal to repurpose one of the culvert cells for pedestrian and bicycle passage would require significant modifications to manage water flow and ensure safety. The feasibility study, conducted with support from the University of Delaware's Water Resources Center, will evaluate the impact of redirecting water flow, particularly considering increased stormwater runoff.

Alternatives under consideration include constructing an independent underpass that would not interfere with the creek's flow. This option would address potential upstream flooding concerns and eliminate the need to modify the existing culvert. Regardless of the approach, any structure would need to meet federal accessibility standards, provide adequate lighting, and ensure security.

This underpass could connect East and West Concord Pike, enhancing access to Beaver Valley Park, Brandywine Creek State Park and First State National Park. For optimal effectiveness, additional connectivity improvements, including trail networks linking local destinations and neighborhoods, would be necessary. Stakeholders, including local property owners, have expressed support for these initiatives.

The study will also consider ongoing and planned developments, such as the Brandywine Country Club redevelopment, which may impact stormwater management and connectivity along the corridor.

Ms. Pam Keeney, representing DNREC's Air Quality section, raised questions about collaborating with DNREC's Water Quality and Stormwater sections regarding drainage concerns. Mr. Dave Gula acknowledged this as a valuable suggestion and requested contact information to initiate collaboration. Ms. Keeney shared the following contact information: Division of Water, 302-739-9943.

Mr. Robert Bullock, representing the Route 9 Community, then inquired about including Route 9 in the study due to ongoing stormwater issues in neighborhoods along the corridor. Mr. Gula noted that while the current project is location specific, he is open to further discussion on potential stormwater improvements along Route 9. He agreed to share his contact information for continued coordination.

Ms. Samantha Bulkilvish expressed enthusiasm about the project's progress, commending Mr. Gula for advancing it and voicing her support for its success.

10. Candidate Bicycle/Pedestrian Funding Pool Projects

Ms. Heather Dunigan explained that typically, a list of new project submissions would be presented at this TAC meeting. This year we did not put out a call for projects due to our understanding that funding was not available. DeIDOT, however has asked for a submission from MPOs and WILMAPCO staff suggests providing past, unfunded applications from the last three years.

Ms. Dunigan requested feedback from the TAC on whether it would be appropriate to resubmit past projects or to consider reopening the call for new projects. Mr. Dan Janousek from MDOT suggested that the selection should focus on projects most ready for construction or aligned with available funding criteria. Ms. Dunigan clarified that the projects, except for the initial list derived from the WILMAPCO RTP, were submitted by community groups or local governments with strong community backing.

Mr. Cooper Bowers asked if the list of candidate projects would require a vote. Ms. Dunigan noted that they are still finalizing the list, as she recently returned from vacation and DeIDOT only recently requested it. She proposed bringing the list to a vote at the November Council meeting and distributing it via email for review by both the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group and TAC.

INFORMATION ITEMS

11. Staff Report

Ms. Heather Dunigan reported the following updates:

- For the Newport Train Station, DeIDOT, DTC, and WILMAPCO have developed the scope for an RFP to secure a consultant to complete the NEPA Studies and Preliminary Engineering. This RFP is expected to be released in Fall.
- On September 17th, the Augustine Cut-Off project held its kickoff meeting with consultant WRA.
- On October 2nd, Staff participated in the Downes Elementary Walk to School Day event.
- On October 7th, the Kirkwood Highway Advisory Committee met to review preliminary recommendations from the analysis. A draft recommendations workshop is scheduled for November 14, at Cranston Heights Fire Station.
- On October 9th, Staff attended a stakeholder meeting for the North Dupont TAP project. A final public workshop is planned, and the project will seek funding to move toward completion.
- On October 9th, the MD-272 Corridor Plan Steering Committee held a meeting and will meet again in early November.
- On October 14th, the Diamond State Line project submitted task items for the scope to the FRA. A stakeholder review is scheduled for November 21.

- On October 16th, the Wilmington Initiatives held a meeting where DeIDOT and city staff reviewed concepts for the Two-Way King Street TAP project.
- On October 17th, the Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee convened.
- On October 18th, Staff will facilitate a meeting on climate change and community engagement at the Community Research Exchange Conference.
- On October 21st, the East Elkton Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On October 22nd, the Rocky Run Advisory Committee will meet jointly with the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee, with public outreach anticipated by January 2025.
- On October 24th, Staff will attend a Title VI training at DeIDOT.
- On October 28th, Staff, along with DeIDOT staff, will tour frequently flooded roads along Route 9 through Wilmington.
- On October 28th, the Claymont Area Master Plan will hold a public workshop at 4:00 PM at the Claymont Fire Company.
- On November 4th, the Ardens Transportation Monitoring Committee will convene.
- On November 18th, the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee will meet.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

Attachments (0)