

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
November 16, 2023

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, November 16, 2023, at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, DE 19713 and via video conference/conference call.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Matt Rogers, New Castle County Department of Land Use, and TAC Chair, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

2. TAC Members present:

Tricia Arndt, Delaware Office of State Planning
Cooper Bowers, Delaware Department of Transportation
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning
Taylor Englert, DNREC
Michael Fortner, City of Newark
Matt Rogers, New Castle County Department of Land Use
Catherine Salarano, Maryland Department of the Environment
Derrick Sexton, Maryland SHA Regional and Intermodal Planning Division
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

TAC Ex-Officio Members present:

Enos Han, US Federal Highway Administration

TAC Members absent:

Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning
City of Wilmington Department of Public Works
City of Wilmington Planning
Delaware Division of Small Business, Development, and Tourism
Delaware River and Bay Authority
Maryland Department of Transportation
Town of Elkton Planning

TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:

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

Guests and Invitees:

Robert Hicks
Scott Spencer

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 October 19, 2023, TAC Minutes.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Tricia Arndt and seconded by Mr. Michael Fortner TAC approved the October 19, 2023, TAC minutes.

Motion passed.

(11-16-23-01)

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

a. Air Quality Subcommittee Update

Mr. Bill Swiatek shared that the Air Quality Subcommittee met on November 2nd. The members reviewed the following TIP amendments and found they did not trigger a revised conformity analysis:

- Replacement of Belvidere Road Bridge CE0055 over CSX Railroad
- I-295 Northbound
- Cedar Lane Road, Marl Pit Road, to Boyds Corner Road
- SR4/Harmony Road Intersection Improvements
- Rehabilitation of I-95, Viaduct Substructure Repairs

Mr. Swiatek added that during this meeting, DNREC also noted that they will be hosting an online public hearing on November 28th to review New Castle County's new State Implementation Plan. The document contains a revised transportation ozone budget, which would be used to measure conformity in the future.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Scott Spencer, Chief Operating Officer of AmeriStar Rail Inc, shared two proposals with the TAC. The first proposal suggests building a single bi-level bridge to replace the existing Amtrak twin bridges at Perryville Junction. This new bridge aims to eliminate operational conflicts, enhance connectivity, and convert the current bridge into a rail trail, closing the gap on the East Coast Greenway.

Mr. Spencer highlighted the challenges posed by Amtrak's bridge replacement design, emphasizing the persistence of operating conflicts and their implications for the MARC train extension through Cecil County. The proposed AmeriStar Rail solution involves constructing a bi-level bridge with upper-level tracks on the bilateral New Havre Grace, effectively resolving operating conflicts and allowing for the potential construction of a MARC train station in Havre de Grace.

The advantages of AmeriStar Rail's proposal include improved utilization of high-speed tracks, reduced environmental impacts, and the creation of a remarkable rail trail across the Susquehanna River. Mr. Spencer noted the collaboration with Klein Felder Engineering and Toole Design for the innovative infrastructure solution, emphasizing its potential for the next 200 years. A detailed letter to Governor Moore and exhibits can be found on the AmeriStar Rail website (<https://ameristarrail.com/new-bilevel-susquehanna-river-bridge>).

Ms. Catherine Solorano, from Maryland Department of Environment inquired about the progress of Ameristar Rail's proposal and the process involved since this was already presented to the governor. Mr. Scott Spencer explained that discussions have taken place with MDOT yet and a briefing is scheduled. A public forum was held in Hartford County, garnering interest from various stakeholders. Responses from Amtrak emphasized the thorough evaluation of alternatives in Amtrak's existing proposal.

Mr. Mike Fortner, a representative from the City of Newark, asked about the lines presented on the images of the proposal and the reuse of the existing railroad for a bike trail pedestrian bridge. Mr. Spencer reiterated that the presentation's illustration was an approximation and not too scale.

The second proposal Mr. Scott Spencer presented was the Wilmington Trolley CityLink. The aim of this proposal is to address the lack of a rail transit link to the Amtrak station in Wilmington, positioning it as a first and last-mile solution. Economic implications for the City of Wilmington were emphasized, with the announcement made publicly. The proposal involves connecting residents, attractions, and businesses on the riverfront with those in downtown, utilizing a single-track loop along Market Street, King Street, and around the riverfront, using battery electric technology to avoid overhead wires.

Mr. Spencer mentioned that he presented publicly and promptly to various stakeholders, including the Mayor, Governor, and members of the General Assembly during DeIDOT's operating budget hearing. Mr. Spencer drew on successful precedents in other cities like Oklahoma City, Kansas City, and Tampa, highlighting the economic benefits and development potential. Mr. Spencer stressed the importance of a fare-free operation for accessibility and equity. The envisioned trolley system would operate every 10 minutes, seven days a week, providing zero-emissions and car-free mobility within Wilmington.

Mr. Matt Rogers asked for the AmeriStar Rail link and requested accessibility to both the presentation and proposals. The Wilmington proposal is online at <https://ameristarrail.com/s/V2-Wilmington-Trolley-CityLink-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

ACTION ITEMS

None.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

6. 2023 Population Projections

Mr. Dan Blevins conducted a comprehensive presentation on the recently adopted 2023 Delaware Population Consortium population projections. Also included in the presentation was a recap of the 2020 urbanized areas recently released by the Census. The focus initially shifted towards the significant changes in the definition of Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) boundaries as a result of the new urbanized boundaries. Mr. Blevins added that this is due to the shift to housing units as the basis for defining boundaries, while shedding light on the resulting alterations in urbanized areas, often referred to as "mini areas." These changes had a profound impact on MPO sizes and boundaries in Delaware, bringing about a doubling of population density. WILMAPCO's 2020 MPO qualifying population size was outlined as 534,880, accompanied by specific changes in urban areas for different portions, such as a change of 12,462 in the New Castle County portion and a decline of -7,897 in the Cecil County portion for WILMAPCO.

Mr. Blevins continued with details on the newly adopted data released by DPC in October 2023, providing statewide population projections and impacts that recent migration patterns have had on the forecasts. Notably, Delaware had already reached a million in population by 2021, contrary to the initial projection for 2030. The presentation covered Sussex County's remarkable net migration and population growth from 2020, projecting a notable increase from 237,378 to 365,362 by 2050. The examination of age structures and their influence on demographic shifts was a key aspect of this discussion.

The broader perspective on Delaware's population projections highlighted the pivotal role played by migration and the aging population in shaping future demographics. Maps illustrating Domestic Net Migration trends nationally were presented, with a specific focus on areas experiencing positive and negative migration from 2020 to 2022. Mr. Blevins provided valuable insights into the sources of migration to Delaware, identifying Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Virginia as major contributors.

The presentation concluded with a detailed discussion on age structures, emphasizing the growing 65 and over population and its implications for future demographic trends. Mr. Blevins anticipated positive birth rate changes beyond 2040, offering a glimpse into the evolving demographic landscape in Delaware by county up to the year 2050. This comprehensive and insightful presentation provided an understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing Delaware's population dynamics.

INFORMATION ITEMS

7. Staff Report

Ms. Heather Dunigan reported the following updates:

- Council met November 9th and reviewed the Technical Scoring Project Prioritization for Delaware Bike/PED program. Council adjusted the order, with the Commons Blvd. Project moved from the number six rank, to two due to its value not being adequately captured surrounding the Hope Center Community Center scoring. Council approved several action items such as, amendment to the TIP, including Belvidere Road Bridge replacement funding. Approval of DelDOT amendments, including the I-95 viaduct rehabilitation, I-295 project, and SR4 Harmony Road. Council requested further information regarding the TIP amendment for Cedar Lane Road, email voting underway, awaiting one more vote for approval.
- On October 20th staff participated in a University of Delaware class discussion on engineering efforts.
- On October 21st, Staff presented to Women's Transportation Seminar.
- On October 23rd Staff presented to City Council meeting regarding the Newark Bike Plan.
- Churchman's Crossing Monitoring Committee met on October 25th.
- On October 26 staff and partners had a Public Workshop for the East Elkton Plan at Elkton's Public Library.
- On October 31st Staff participated in Cecil County, MDOT Tour Meeting.
- On November 1st Staff participated in Susquehanna River crossing pedestrian Bike Route stakeholder meeting.
- On November 8th Concord Pike Monitoring Committee held a meeting.
- On November 13th Kirkwood Highway Traffic Circulation Study and partners held their first monitoring committee meeting.

- On November 13th the East Elkton Steering Committee and partners held a meeting.
- The Ardens Monitoring Committee kickoff meeting was held on November 14th.
- On November 17th the South Claymont and Philadelphia Corridor Master Plan will have a kickoff meeting.
- On November 28th staff will present TJ work to the University of Washington Health and Sustainable Transportation class.
- Staff will participate in planning an April conference on Equity Action spearheaded by Healthy Communities Delaware.
- On December 7th the Newport Transportation Study Planning will hold its first Monitoring Committee.
- Staff scheduled the Kirkwood Highway Corridor Master Plan Listening Tour and Visioning Workshop for December 11th.
- On December 21st Staff invites the TAC and AQS to the annual WILMAPCO Holiday Lunch. The Meeting will be held virtually and in person, but in-person attendance is encouraged.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 10:49 a.m.

Attachments (0)