

# TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

**December 17, 2020**

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, December 17, 2020, via video conference/conference call.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Steve O'Connor, Cecil County Department of Land Use and TAC Co-chair, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

**2. TAC Members present:**

Tricia Arndt, Delaware Office of State Planning  
Ian Beam, Maryland Department of Transportation  
Cooper Bowers, Delaware Department of Transportation  
Alexandra Brun, Maryland Department of the Environment  
Marvina Cephas, DNREC  
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning  
Stacey Dahlstrom, New Castle County Department of Land Use  
Michael Fortner, City of Newark  
Jeanne Minner, Town of Elkton  
Steve O'Connor, Cecil County Department of Land Use  
Catherine Smith, DTC

**TAC Ex-Officio Members present:**

**TAC Members absent:**

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

Tyson Byrne, MDOT  
Jolyon Shelton, DNREC  
Josh Thomas, DeIDOT

**Staff:**

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner  
Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner  
Sharen Elcock, Executive Assistant

Dave Gula, Principal Planner  
Randi Novakoff, Outreach Manager  
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner  
Jacob Thompson, Senior Planner  
Dawn Voss, Administrative Assistant  
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by: Dawn Voss

### **3. MINUTES**

The November 19, 2020 TAC Minutes were approved.

**ACTION:** On motion by Ms. Tricia Arndt and seconded by Mr. Ian Beam the TAC approved the November 19, 2020 TAC minutes.

Motion passed.

**(12-17-20 - 01)**

### **4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

#### **a. Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group met on December 1<sup>st</sup>. An overview about the Bike Delaware webinar “Designing Delaware Intersections for People” was presented. This was a conference where national and international bicycle planning experts were invited to give their thoughts on how a few intersections in Delaware could be redesigned. Those sessions can be viewed on Bike Delaware’s website. Mr. Jake Thompson presented an overview of the Route 9 Paths Plan. There was an update on the Trail Amenity Grant Program that Delaware Greenways is offering through the Future Trails of Northern Delaware Coalition, which funds kiosks, benches, wayfinding, and other amenities on trails and pathways. Also, Ms. Dunigan presented an overview on the Transportation Alternatives Program. Applications for that program in New Castle County are due January 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### **b. Air Quality Subcommittee**

Mr. Bill Swiatek said The Air Quality Subcommittee met on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. The group received an update from EPA about a transportation conformity model update, along with the status of the ozone and PM2.5 standards. In addition, DNREC presented on the emissions analyses associated with the Delaware Climate Action Plan.

### **5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

None.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **6. To recommend endorsement of the Governor Printz Boulevard Corridor Study**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said the five alternative concepts were presented at a public workshop in September. A survey was available for a month to receive feedback. Based on all of the feedback, Alternative 3 is recommended, a road diet with pathways on both sides of road and the lane divided by a median. The report fulfills the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study process that outlines existing conditions and constraints; the process followed; alternatives considered; pros and cons of each alternative; and the final

recommendation. The report also has an implementation section outlining who would be responsible for the actions. The appendices go into more detail about the outreach, site constraints, travel time analysis, and plan sheets for the recommendations. One additional appendix will be added which that shows the elements of a PEL study and where those elements can be found in the report. The plan sheets show where the road diet is suggested and also how it connects into the surrounding areas. At the southern end, the road returns to four lanes, and the pathway is on the northern side of the road. The report is out for public comment until January 7<sup>th</sup>. So far, the only comments have been technical comments and edits from the planning partner team.

**ACTION:** On motion by Ms. Cathy Smith and seconded by Ms. Jeanne Minner the TAC recommended endorsement of the Governor Printz Boulevard Corridor Study.

Motion passed.

**(12-17-20 - 02)**

#### **7. To recommend endorsement of the Newport Transportation Plan**

Mr. Dave Gula said the draft report was created but is not yet on the WILMAPCO website as the study team is incorporating information from last night's workshop before making the report available on the website. The recommendations have not changed. There are about twenty recommendations throughout the study area. Three workshops were held, and good feedback was received. The community is very engaged. The main change was in implementing it. At last night's workshop a series of poll questions were used to receive feedback about ways to prioritize the recommendations such as by mode, funding type, or geographic location. The conclusion was a mix of everything. The main addition to the recommendations was a monitoring committee as was done with US 40, the SR 9 Study and was recommended for the Concord Pike Study. Work is being done on the prioritization section, but hopefully a monitoring committee will be the vehicle for prioritization and implementation. Last night, Dermody Properties, the builder for the Amazon site, said they will make some of the recommended improvements in front of the facility on Boxwood Road. There were positive comments about the recommended connections to parks and schools. There were no comments from community to change anything. The draft report will be on the website soon and remain on the site for public comments until January 11<sup>th</sup>. Council Action is expected on January 14<sup>th</sup>. The staff is happy with the report as written and asks for TAC endorsement.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Cooper Bowers and seconded by Ms. Tricia Arndt the TAC recommended endorsement of the Newport Transportation Plan.

Motion passed.

**(12-17-20 - 03)**

#### **8. To recommend endorsement of the Five Point Intersection Safety & Capacity Improvement Study**

Mr. Dave Gula shared the executive summary. The study team is working to complete the draft report, but the executive summary will be on the website to review. The team met with stakeholders in November, and an update on the public outreach for the study was presented to the PAC at their December meeting. The executive summary describes the completed work and summarizes the recommendations. The recommendation is a roadway improvement project, for which a preferred alternative is identified, if/when the project moves forward. Changes to DTC's operational facilities are needed in order to put the alternative

into place, and at this time there are many traffic uncertainties including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on congestion, how much congestion relief will come from the Margaret Rose Henry Bridge, and the impact that the I-95 rehabilitation will have for the next three years. The current recommendation is that this is a final plan that could be put in place for DTC as a feasible garage and parking operation. The critical issues with the decision to move forward is that after the roadway changes, both Delmarva's and DTC's operating feasibility and efficiency must be maintained. There is an underground sewer outfall under Delmarva's parking lot and DTC's maintenance building which should be avoided during construction. Also, the Reybold property may be developed, which would remove one of the two viable concepts referenced in the study for the garage for DTC. This study provides a path for the future if the groups participating want to move forward. Further study is required to actually implement the feasibility study for the garage for DTC.

**ACTION:** On motion by Ms. Jeanne Minner and seconded by Mr. Mike Fortner the TAC recommended endorsement of the Five Point Intersection Safety & Capacity Improvement Study.

Motion passed.

(12-17-20 - 04)

## **PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

### **9. Route 9 Paths Plan**

Mr. Jake Thompson said this is a new plan that branched out from the Route 9 Master Plan. That plan proposed a network of walking and biking paths in corridor. The Paths Plan expands and refines those bicycle and pedestrian recommendations and develops new recommendations for a network of paths in and around the Route 9 corridor. A map was created of bicycle and pedestrian recommendations from the recent plans in the corridor. Background data was collected including demographics; transportation facilities; and socioeconomic and health factors. That background data was used to prioritize all the road segments in the study area to get a better idea of which parts of the corridor would benefit more from these types of recommendations. That prioritization process was applied to the draft recommendations. A missing links analysis was created to identify missing connections between neighborhoods. The team is currently working on public outreach through an online survey. A paper version of that survey is also being distributed to make sure all neighborhoods and demographics are included.

A map of bicycle and pedestrian recommendations from recent plans will be updated as the plan progresses, and the final version will propose a network of neighborhood paths for the Route 9 corridor. A prioritization of road segments was completed. This process uses a series of transportation and demographic data to give a score to each road segment in the study area. This is used in data points that indicate the need for biking and walking improvements such as the percentage of people who walk, bike, or take transit to work; the number of workplaces nearby; and the number of bus stops nearby. These scores are calculated for each road segment and the higher the score means the more that area will benefit more from improvements. Using this process helps ensure communities that are most in need of improvements have their needs addressed. The higher-scored areas are in the center of the study area around Dunleith, Oakmont, and Rosegate so these neighborhoods would benefit the most from these types of improvements, though all neighborhoods would benefit. Those scores were then applied to the draft recommendations, and after the recommendations are finalized, this will help guide implementation in order of priority.

One of the measures that went into prioritization is Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (Bike LTS), which is an analysis that DelDOT put together that measures the level of traffic stress that people experience while biking based on traffic and infrastructure conditions. Scores range from 1 being the least stressful, to 4 being the most stressful. An LTS 1 road is often a trail and is safe for everyone to use with people separated from traffic. An LTS 4 road is a highest-traffic road, where people are not encouraged to walk or bike. In the Route 9 area, streets with low LTS scores are mostly in residential areas, but many of these neighborhoods are surrounded by high-stress roads, which limit how far people can comfortably walk or bike outside of their neighborhoods. These are low-stress biking islands that are comfortable for everyone but divided by higher-stress roads. The goal of the Paths Plan is to connect as many of these islands as possible, making it possible for people to bike and walk for transportation. A missing links analysis was done. By placing the draft recommendations over the low-stress biking islands, you can see where connections could be made. The missing links are specific sections of recommendations that can be made that could make crucial connections between those neighborhoods and islands. The missing link was given a score based on population and that score is factored back into the prioritization.

Now that all that data is compiled, the team is working on public outreach. Information is primarily being distributed on the website, [wilmapco.org/route9pathsplan](http://wilmapco.org/route9pathsplan). It is also being promoted through Facebook ads, the WILMAPCO newsletter, and Colonial Clippings, which is the school district's newsletter. On the website there is an online public survey where there is a drawing for a \$25 Visa gift card to encourage participation. Also on the website is an overview presentation in lieu of a public workshop, which has all of the maps and data as well as clear descriptions of everything. Also, there are Spanish translations of everything to make sure it is understandable for everyone.

Last week, there was a presentation on introductory planning, walkable communities, and the Route 9 Paths Plan at an AP Human Geography class at William Penn High School. These students have coursework with GIS and civic engagement, so this was an opportunity for them to learn about GIS in the real world and how planning works. Students took the survey and helped distribute it to other students in the school. The survey asked questions about how often people bike, if people would walk or bike more often if there were more pathways, and what destinations would they want to access via walking or bicycling. So the team will know they reached all neighborhoods, the survey asked people in which neighborhood they live and follow-up questions about conditions and safety to collect information specific to each neighborhood. About sixty survey responses have been received so far, with about half from within the corridor. For those that were local, they have mostly been clustered in central neighborhoods, so the team is working on some neighborhood-targeted outreach. By gender, the responses have been even. By age, 67% of respondents are adults under 65, 20% are seniors and 13% are under 18. The team is trying to increase responses from younger people.

The next steps include working with the Colonial School District to see if there are other ways to get surveys to students and families. A community member is distributing the survey door-to-door. Ms. Dora Williams was recently hired as the Route 9 Community Engagement Coordinator for the New Castle Prevention Coalition. She recently worked with the Census, so she will be a great help getting the survey out to more neighborhoods, particularly to young people and those who do not have access to the internet. The survey will be open as long as necessary to get the needed feedback, then hopefully, the survey results will be analyzed early in 2021. Then, the recommendations will be refined based on public feedback and a draft report will be created.

## **10. Churchman's Crossing Corridor Plan**

Mr. Dan Blevins said this plan is being updated due to changes in the development and transportation patterns in Churchman's Crossing corridor since the plan's adoption in 1997. Many new tools can be used to implement a plan, like TIDS and CCEDs. The New Castle Comp Plan and the RTP have changed. Initially there was monitoring of projects for Churchman's Crossing, but not since 2004. The three main goals from the 1997 study were enhance quality of life, plan for sustainable growth, and provide transportation choices. These goals are unchanged. This update will determine if unfinished projects are still viable, if new projects or technologies can achieve the project goals, and if the vision for the area has changed.

The original study area was from Wilmington to Newark. The current study area is more compact, from Old Baltimore Pike to the south and Kirkwood Highway to the north. Since 1997, twenty-five of the sixty-one projects were completed including the train station, interchange improvements, and some bus improvements. In 1997 there were 9.6 million square feet of non-residential development with 3.7 million more committed with new Land Use plans. In 2019, we have 14.4 million square feet of non-residential development with 3.7 million committed. This study is parallel with the County Comp Plan, which will be approved sometime in 2022. The Churchman's plan will likely be formalized via Comp Plan amendment or added as a section.

There was a listening tour during which the team reached out to elected officials, community groups, and other stakeholders. Twenty-two stakeholders were interviewed on a series of topics including jobs, land use, transportation, bicycle/pedestrian, and transit. Some of the common themes were safety, reduced congestion, create more bike and pedestrian opportunities, and increase accessibility to transit including MARC. This is a low-lying area, so flooding is a concern. The first public workshop was in September with one hundred and thirteen attendees. The results of the listening tour were presented as well as current conditions, which illustrated what has happened since 1997. Attendees were asked what they find valuable about Churchman's Crossing and what would they like to see in the next twenty years. People like the job centers, transit opportunities, and flexibility, but in the future, they want to see clean water, mixed use, better traffic flow, and interconnectivity. On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Advisory Committee met with twenty-nine stakeholders to brief them in more detail about current conditions and have a more in-depth conversation about the corridor. The team also presented to the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce.

Today the area is a major job center. About a quarter of the jobs are in the health and education sector, but there are also jobs in finance, hospitality, and a large retail component. Only 4% of people live and work in the study area, and 96% commute in to work each day. Many commute from New Castle County, but people also commute from Cecil, Kent, Delco, and Chester Counties. Within New Castle County, commuters are widely distributed. Of the 70% of those commuters into the study area, 12% are from the greater Newark area, 19% from New Castle, and Brandywine, Glasgow, and MOT each make up about 10%.

The team is currently working with the recommendations of the 2012 Comp Plan. The New Castle County Comp Plan is being updated now, which may shift the division of land use for the area. There are approximately fifteen thousand households in the area and thirty-five to forty thousand jobs per day. There is a lot of parking and impervious surface. Overall, the area is well developed with some wetlands and open space. The area is suitable for future redevelopment. There is a question of what will happen to malls and shopping centers post-COVID. In discussion of mixed-use development, how land use affects travel patterns in the area is considered looking at density, diversity, and design. Also, tools that are now available can determine how land use affects VMT and accessibility. There is a conception that mixed-use will

lead to additional travel demand. The team is trying to show the difference between single-use versus mixed-use development using the MXD model to look at more localized changes. Single-use development shows very high peaks in the morning and afternoon, while mixed-use development spreads traffic throughout the day. They are trying to bring some of this information into the discussion of the corridor. Traffic operations measured in the fall of 2019 show traffic congestion in the morning and afternoon peaks. More tools and data are available to identify challenges and find solutions. Safety is a concern of many of the residents and users of the area. The area has six of the top twenty worst intersections for accidents in the state based on number, severity, and cost. A multimodal inventory shows area bus stops, bus shelters, sidewalks, crosswalks, and footpaths to illustrate the gaps. Bus ridership is highest around the mall, but there are a number of stops within this area with varying levels of ridership. The bicycle level of traffic stress is a new tool available to show how people feel on the road with current conditions. Many of the major roads through the study area are high stress, which leads to islands where it is comfortable to ride a bicycle, but main roads between neighborhoods are high stress.

The team will evaluate the transportation needs compared to future growth at varying levels to determine what 3.7 million square feet of committed development with current traffic conditions will do to congestion and what improvements can be made. There are still many project ideas and with the new development, it needs to be determined which of these ideas will contribute to traffic flow, transit flow, and better bicycle/pedestrian conditions in the area. Scenario planning is being done now. An alternatives workshop will likely be held in the late winter. Hopefully, a final product will be ready in the fall of 2021.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **11. Staff Report**

Ms. Dunigan reported the following updates:

- The Advisory Committee for the Newport Transportation Study met on November 30<sup>th</sup>. The final virtual workshop was held yesterday, and the draft report will be available to view on the WILMAPCO website until January.
- The Advisory Committee for the Churchman's Crossing Study met on December 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Staff met with Westside Groves on December 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss the Safe Routes to School program. Staff will serve on an advisory committee for a Wilmington Open Streets Initiative that is being organized by Westside Groves and Urban Bike Project.
- Staff participated in a Maryland Transit Plan Roundtable on December 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The City of New Castle Transportation Plan had their first Advisory Committee meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup>. They will be presenting to the City of New Castle Town Council on January 12<sup>th</sup> and are planning to schedule the first public workshop for that plan in January.
- On December 10<sup>th</sup> staff conducted outreach for the William Penn High School AP Geography class for the Route 9 Paths Plan.
- Staff has been working with the committee for the Cecil County Highway Strategic Safety Plan. The first draft will be available for comment on the Cecil County website the evening of January 4<sup>th</sup>. The virtual workshop will be held on January 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. The details for that workshop will be on the Cecil County website.
- On January 14<sup>th</sup>, staff will be presenting to the Mid-Atlantic Public Health Partnership Conference about health in the planning process.
- The New Castle County Transportation Alternatives Program applications will be accepted until January 15<sup>th</sup> and we have been advising a few of the applicants who had questions on the application process and eligibility of projects.

- The draft Governor Printz Boulevard Study will continue to be online for public review until January 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff is working with the Red Clay Valley Scenic Byway Alliance to update the corridor management plan for the Scenic Byway.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Mr. Stephen O'Connor announced that Mr. Eric Sennstrom retired from Cecil County government after thirty years of service. The new County Executive of Cecil County has asked Mr. O'Connor to move to the WILMAPCO Council. According to the bylaws, he cannot serve on both Council and the TAC, so this is his last TAC meeting. Some candidates to replace him on the TAC have been identified and the appointment is being finalized now. Also, Mr. O'Connor reminds everyone that Cecil County has the Highway Strategic Safety Planning meeting on January 12<sup>th</sup>.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Michael Fortner and seconded by Ms. Jeanne Minner the TAC adjourned at 11:01 AM.

Motion passed.

**(12-17-20 - 05)**

The TAC adjourned at 11:01 AM

**Attachments (0)**