

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
February 16, 2023

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, February 16, 2023, via video conference/conference call.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Tricia Arndt, Delaware Office of State Planning, and TAC Vice Chair, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:09 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
Michael Fortner, City of Newark
Gwinneth Kaminsky, City of Wilmington Planning
Rashad Pinckney, Maryland Department of Transportation
Catherine Salarano, Maryland Department of the Environment
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

TAC Ex-Officio Members present:

TAC Members absent:

Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning
City of Wilmington Department of Public Works
Delaware Division of Small Business, Development, and Tourism
Delaware River and Bay Authority
DNREC
Maryland State Highway Administration
Maryland Transit Administration
New Castle County Department of Land Use
Town of Elkton Planning

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:

Annette Collier, New Castle County Realtors
Jane Dilley, New Castle County League of Women Voters
Kerie Grey, Keller Williams Realty
Deanna Murphy, Cecil County Board of Realtors

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

Approval of the January 19, 2023, TAC Minutes.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Michael Fortner and seconded by Ms. Gwineth Kaminsky TAC approved the January 19, 2023, TAC minutes.

Motion passed.

(02-16-23-01)

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

a. Air Quality Subcommittee

Mr. Bill Swiatek said the Air Quality Subcommittee met on February 2. The group received a presentation from MDE on the Ozone State Implementation Plan (SIP) Update for Cecil County. As part of that effort, newer, lower draft mobile emissions budgets have been developed. These will be used in future transportation conformity analyses in Cecil County. The group did not express any concerns about either the process for developing these budgets or the budgets themselves.

b. Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group

Ms. Heather Dunigan said the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group met on February 7th. The RTP Approval was the only agenda item. The group discussed the bicycle and pedestrian projects in some detail. The group was pleased with the increase in funding for bicycle and pedestrian improvements over the current RTP and the new pool of money that is shown on the Delaware list of projects. There were questions about a few of the older projects, and we followed up with individual members about a bridge on Kirkwood Highway that is a long stretch of road with no pedestrian facilities. That is a costly project and the group asked for more details. There was also a comment about some of the new planning initiatives from New Castle County. The Newark to Newport Feasibility Study, and the Newark to Glasgow Feasibility Study are not directly shown on the constrained list, although most of their elements are in the New Castle County Bicycle Plan, which is included in the RTP in its entirety on the aspirations list. In the end, they voted to recommend adoption of the RTP.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

ACTION ITEMS

6. To recommend adoption of the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said staff have developed a draft of the RTP over the past several months. It complies with the Federal Transportation requirements, which include having a financially constrained and air quality conforming project list. Nationally required performance measures are included, as well as local ones that have deeper measures and analyses. Staff created the Regional Progress Report, and based on that our objectives and actions were reviewed and revised. Some were added and others removed. This was based on the performance measures that were in the Regional Progress Report and related to the RTP actions. The third aspect of the RTP is public input. Staff gathered feedback from member agencies, local governments, and civic representatives to ensure we have heard and understand the transportation needs of our residents. The RTP was highlighted at the Our Town event on February 8th at the Embassy Suites. Staff attended more than twenty presentations to civic and local governments and attended Newark Community Day to solicit feedback on the RTP. Staff developed flyers and have been sharing those flyers at several events and workshops, created press releases, posted frequently on social media, and have a number of articles on the RTP in the WILMAPCO Transporter and the e-news newsletter, which reached more than eight thousand people. The RTP has been out for public comment since January 18th, which will continue through March 6th.

Ms. Zegeye shared some of the comments that were received. The Elderly and Disabled Transit Advisory Committee of DART asked why we do not have an MPO in Sussex County. The Town of Elsmere was concerned that they did not have any RTP projects, and they have concerns about Kirkwood Highway, especially related to bus stops and lighting on the highway. Centerville is most concerned about speed throughout the town, as well as pedestrian and bicycle safety on Route 52. Ardencroft commented about improving safety at the intersection of Harvey Road and Sconset Road. The Town of Middletown had no questions, but the mayor stated that he likes the plan and looks forward to looking at the project map. Newport had no questions but expressed interest in the Newport Train Station moving forward. The Wilmington City Council Public Works and Transportation Committee had a question about the designation of the transportation investment areas, and they had several questions related to projects in the city. Delaware City had process-oriented questions such as how often local plans are updated, expressed when theirs was last updated, and then asked how they can submit projects. The Committee of 100 are interested in the project list, especially the Churchmans Crossing area. They have concerns about some of the road diet projects being proposed in Wilmington. They also have interest in the Claymont Train Station area. They also appreciated the coordination between WILMAPCO and New Castle County Land Use in connecting transportation and land use. In Arden, there were no questions or comments. The League of Women Voters had a number of questions including some about funding expansion projects and asked about the opportunity to look at draft goals, objectives, and actions. They asked about specific projects related to pedestrian safety improvements on Library Avenue in Newark. The Town of Charlestown asked about the TAP program and eligibility. Old County Road would like to see a project on the aspiration list moved to the constrained list. Cecil County Council asked about the implementation date for the I-95 expansion project. They asked for more information on the East Coast Greenway Project Phases 1 and 2 and how we can work with EJ communities in Cecil County. They have continued concerns about traffic diversion from the US 301 toll road and their coordination with DelDOT.

There were some comments from residents. One person would like to extend work in the Ardens to the west side of Grubb Road. There was a lengthy email concerning diesel emissions from the new warehouse approvals throughout Delaware and how it is affecting the air quality for all residents. Our hope is to answer where it is a WILMAPCO issue, then where it is not, we plan to forward the question or concern to the appropriate member agencies for their response. From the Our Town meeting on February 8th, an attendee commented that we have to integrate

rail, air, and port into any study that we do. The most liked project was the 12th Street access to the central business district. The least liked project was the I-95 Cap. One person suggested that WILMAPCO expand into land use coordination. Another person suggested that the goal and objectives in the plan need to be practiced, meaning mixed uses are being allowed in areas with known pollution and mixing residential with industry, so talking about implementing the goals of the RTP to meet those demands. Bike Newark gave many reasons why the bike improvements on Wyoming Road should be moved from the aspiration list to the financially constrained list.

Staff went to all the Council members and their staff, and out of those discussions many comments were received. We cannot meet some of project suggestions for many reasons. One specific example is the recommendation to add SR 2 and SR 7 or Churchmans Road Extension to the constrained list. These are expansion projects and not modeled in the air quality conformity. Therefore, we cannot move them. There are many other suggestions that we were able to accommodate. For example, moving projects from the aspiration list to the constrained list such as Hares Corner Grade Separation and the Christina River Greenway, which also included renaming it the Newport River Trail. Many projects were moved from the constrained to aspiration list, including the DDI at I-95 and Naamans Road, the I-495 pedestrian bridge next to Philadelphia Pike, North Claymont Spine Road: Northeast Corridor to Naamans Road, Newport Rail Station, US 40 Overpass of Norfolk Southern RR near SR 72, and US 301 Spur.

After the TAC voted to release the RTP to the public, but before the Council actually released it, staff were able to accommodate a majority of the comments. There were others that we were not able to accommodate for many reasons. After the Council meeting, DelDOT commented that they were concerned about precision of the in-service date and the year of expenditure cost, and WILMAPCO has added clarifying language in the RTP explaining that the RTP is required to have a financially constrained project list, but the actual implementation of those projects comes through the TIP. We acknowledge that this is a requirement, and we have to have year of expenditure and in-service dates, but for the implementation the TIP is more critical. The twenty-year plan is a goal that we have for the region, but implementation would be coming through the TIP process, which the TAC is involved in through the prioritization process with WILMAPCO. A letter from New Castle County was received yesterday. They expressed support of important goals and objectives in the draft RTP that are shared with the 2050 New Castle County Comprehensive Plan. They acknowledge the TIAs are consistent with the Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending. They would like some revision based on their comp plan south of the C&D Canal, which we will look into. Staff will be working on how to respond to this and how to present it to the Council at their March meeting. The county expressed support of our TIA on the rural area and proposed additional language to clarify the curbing of sprawl and encouraging sustainable growth. The Core, Center, and Community area are consistent with their policy. Related to the RTP projects, for most part, they are in support of multi-modal projects that have been included in the long-range plan, especially in the constrained aspect, and specifically a number of projects all over New Castle County. Bridge Project 234 in New Castle County is on the constrained list with \$28 million set aside for it. The County suggests that this bike/ped project be moved to the aspiration list, and projects recommended in the New Castle County Bicycle Plan and other planning efforts be moved to the constrained list. Staff will discuss this internally then respond to the Council and to New Castle County. The County made some specific recommendations for the long-range plan which are appropriate, and we do not have any issue accommodating them.

Our hope is that TAC will recommend the approval to the Council. The Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group endorsed it at their last meeting. The PAC endorsed the public

outreach aspect of the long-range plan at their last meeting. The goal is to have Council adopt it in March, then it will be submitted to FHWA, FTA, and EPA for approval.

ACTION: On a motion by Mr. Michael Fortner and seconded by Ms. Gwineth Kaminsky the TAC recommends the adoption of the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Motion passed.

(02-16-23-02)

7. To recommend adoption of the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan and FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program Air Quality Conformity Determination.

Mr. Bill Swiatek said in step with the RTP Update, new conformity determinations were developed for both New Castle County and Cecil County. Both comfortably demonstrate conformity to the applicable Fine Particulate Matter and Ozone tests. These documents have been out for public comment since January 18, and we have not yet received any comments specific to their content. We are seeking TAC action to recommend their adoption.

ACTION: On a motion by Mr. David Dahlstrom and seconded by Mr. Michael Fortner the TAC recommends the adoption of the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan and FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program Air Quality Conformity Determination.

Motion passed.

(02-16-23-03)

8. To recommend amendment of the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Plan Improvement Program (TIP).

Ms. Heather Dunigan that Cecil County has requested that the FY 2023-2026 TIP be amended to add the replacement of Bridge 42, which is on Mechanics Valley Road over CSX, back into the TIP. It was in the FY 2020 TIP, and at the time the last construction money was shown in FY 2020. The project has fallen behind schedule, so this will add it back and show construction money in FY 2024 at a cost of \$11 million dollars, which would be 80% Federal, 20% local. This would be a full replacement on a new alignment with improvements to Mechanics Valley Road at the Bouchelle Road intersection.

ACTION: On a motion by Mr. David Dahlstrom and seconded by Mr. Michael Fortner the TAC recommends the amendment of the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Motion passed.

(02-16-23-04)

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

9. Arden Transportation Plan Update

Mr. Bill Swiatek said this is an update about Connecting with the Ardens: A Transportation Plan. The Ardens are located just north of Wilmington, between Wilmington and the Pennsylvania border. WILMAPCO was approached by a delegation from all three Ardens villages to look at ways to address transportation issues common in the Ardens, with a focus on traffic calming and access and safety of active transportation. The steering committee that has been guiding this study is comprised of representatives from DART, DelDOT, all three villages, and New Castle County. There is a piece of the study area that is unincorporated New Castle County, so we appreciate their participation in the study. The team gathered public input, looked at existing

conditions, and developed some alternatives. Now we are in the phase where the preferred alternative will be selected. Next, those projects will be prioritized, and an implementation plan developed. The implementation plan is expected to be developed by the May-June timeframe, at which point we will seek approval of the village councils.

Survey One had good coverage throughout the community. It was found that speeding is a key issue, particularly on Harvey Road. Sixty-seven percent of people surveyed are either very or extremely concerned with speeding on that road. About half of the people are very or extremely concerned about speeding on Veal Road, which runs north and south and connects into Harvey Road. About a quarter of the people are very or extremely concerned about speeding on Marsh Road. The team did speed counts that reinforced much of what was heard from the public, particularly on Harvey Road, where the posted speed is 25 miles an hour, but the eighty-fifth percentile speed was 38 to 40 miles per hour. Even higher speeds were recorded near I-95, where people are going 50 miles an hour in a 25 miles an hour zone. There is some speeding on Veale Road, but not as pronounced as on Harvey. In the survey, people were asked what amenities they would like to see on Harvey Road and the other roads. There were many great ideas. Improved pedestrian crossings is the number one suggestion, but we heard a lot about lighting, amenities for bicycling, better bus shelters, more sidewalks, and turn lanes.

From that analysis and from the survey, the team developed project goals. The first goal is to better manage the travel speed through the Ardens and develop safety countermeasures to improve safety. The second is looking at a pedestrian and bike network. The Ardens have many trails, but they do not always connect to each other, making it difficult to travel all the way through the Ardens or through the Ardens to other places on those trails. This goal is to develop a solid network to be able to do that in the future. The third goal is to provide enhanced crossings, particularly at Harvey Road and Veale Road. These are dangerous roads where we should help ensure pedestrians can cross safely. The fourth goal is enhancing transit, particularly the bus stops in the community. The team developed a series of alternatives, and now we are in the phase of selecting which ones are preferred in the community. A second community survey is currently on the project website through the middle of March. That survey goes through each alternative and will help assess the level of support for the alternatives. That survey began on February 15th at a second community workshop, and we held a workshop beforehand for the youth in the community, where they expressed where they play, where they would like to go, and some of their ideas for traffic calming. A youth-centered survey is out as well.

The first goal, which looks at managing vehicle speed, is built off of a study that WILMAPCO did in 1999 that developed points of consensus, particularly with the nearby fire department and the Ardens. The points on which everyone agreed include no vertical traffic calming features but focusing on horizontal features, complying with DeIDOT standards, using low-level landscaping, and making sure all the features would be traversable for emergency vehicles and buses. It was decided that this study's alternatives will conform to these points of consensus, but still traffic calm in a way that would effectively lower speeds. Some of the traffic calming features that we think will work in the Ardens include rectangular rapid flashing beacons at pedestrian crossing, gateway features, bumpouts, bioswales, which could alleviate some flooding in the community, and things like chicanes and mini-roundabouts that would help lower speeds. Starting at Marsh Road and Harvey Roads there are a couple of different alternative gateway treatments that could be put in place, such as a roundabout or a gateway treatment in the median. Then moving east along Harvey Road, a mini roundabout could be added on Harvey at Hillside Road, trail connections, medians, and crosswalks can be made further on, then another mini roundabout at the intersection at Orleans Road. Another alternative would be to maintain the signal at that

intersection but provide better site lines and approaches. Continuing to the east, other treatments are being considered at each of the intersections such as relocating a crossing that has poor site lines, installing median treatments to keep the road as narrow as possible, and bumpouts. A gateway feature is proposed near I-95 as well as the idea to reduce that section to one lane entering the Ardens. This would have to be modeled, but it received positive community feedback. The team is considering better ways to channelize the traffic with intersection modifications at Sconset Road. To reduce speeds on Veale Road, the team proposes reducing the speed limit from 35 to 25 miles per hour and using medians to maintain lower speeds while acting as a crossing feature for pedestrians to reach trails on either side.

A second goal was to develop a better pedestrian and bike network. The existing trails are disconnected. This goal is to link those trails, not to put so many features on Harvey Road itself, but to link them on either side of it, and then have good crossings of Harvey at key points to allow access to the trails on either side of the community. Another alternative that some people like but is not the most popular so far is to put sidewalks and bike lanes on Harvey Road itself. There would be a space issue in many places, but it is being offered as an alternative to see how the community feels about it.

The third goal addresses enhanced crossings. Many of these places were identified through the first survey. Over one hundred residents responded to a Wikimap exercise, and from that, a heat map showing problematic areas for biking and walking was developed. A list of places that could potentially have enhanced pedestrian crossings was created from the heat map, feedback received at the walkable community workshop, and other comments. The team is working with the community to make sure these are the right places for crossings and how to prioritize them. We are not addressing design but defer to the best practices with traffic engineering to identify the right treatments for the crossings. For transit, existing stops are being evaluated to determine where the community may want to add a bus shelter, and if that bus shelter would be a traditional DART shelter or a unique shelter that the community would maintain. A current survey is asking which shelter type is preferred and which stops are the priority for connectivity. In the first survey residents were asked where they would like to go on a bus if they could. Bus Route 11 runs from Wilmington to the Ardens and back to Wilmington. Many residents would like more east-west connections. Forty-three percent would like to be able to go to Concord Pike on a bus. Seventy-five percent would like to go to the Claymont Train Station, which is not a direct connection right now. This requires a discussion with DART on potential ways that this could fit into the DART Reimagined program or other efforts.

There was a public workshop last night. The engagement with the youth that was held before the workshop had a good turnout. The aim is to focus on completing the second survey to collect feedback and see which of these are the highest priority. We are in the phase of selecting the preferred alternative, and we will then move on to the phase of developing the plan after that. The website is www.wilmapco.org/ardens.

INFORMATION ITEMS

11. Staff Report

Ms. Heather Dunigan reported the following updates:

- A special meeting of the Council was held on February 7th to review two TIP amendments. The first was to amend the I-95 and 896 Interchange Project to increase the funding, so DelDOT can go with the lowest bid that they received. The other was to defer the construction money for the US 40 and 896 Interchange improvements to pay for that increase in funding for the I-95 and 896 project. Both amendments were approved.

- Wilmington Initiatives met February 15th. In addition to their usual updates, they discussed a two-way King Street TAP project and bicycle pedestrian crossing concerns along MLK Jr. Boulevard. Staff are working with the City and DelDOT to resubmit the 12th Street Project for the FY 2023 RAISE Grant Program.
- The Newport Transportation Study Monitoring Committee Public Workshop will be March 7th.
- Staff is working with the Delaware governor's office, DelDOT, and Dover Kent MPO on a grant application for the Delmarva Rail Corridor as part of the Federal Rail Administration's funding opportunity for Rail Corridor Identification and Development Program. The application is due on March 27th.
- Staff presented at the New Castle County League of Women Voters on January 25th as part of a session entitled *What is VMT and How Does It Help with climate Change?*
- Staff presented our climate vulnerability work at a University of Pennsylvania class on January 30th.
- The Ardens Transportation Plan Public Workshop and Youth Workshop was held on February 15th.
- The Southbridge Transportation Action Plan Steering Committee will meet on February 28th. A public workshop is tentatively scheduled for March 21st and a youth engagement event is scheduled for March 2nd.
- WILMAPCO partnered with Delaware APA on February 8th to hold a parking forum. One of the presenters was TAC member, Mr. Mike Fortner.
- WILMAPCO hosted the Our Town event on February 8th.
- On February 23rd, staff will participate in Downes Family Fun Night, where a number of presenters on health and safety will be included.
- March 22nd will be the Churchmans Crossing Winter meeting.
- On March 29th staff will film a video with Tropo, our mascot.
- On February 21st staff will present our Safe Streets for All Plan to Safe Kids Delaware.
- Staff assisted the City of Newark with a Bicycle Friendly Community application to the League of American Bicyclists that was submitted February 15th.

OTHER BUSINESS:

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Gwinneth Kaminsky and seconded by Mr. Cooper Bowers the TAC adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

Motion passed.

(02-16-23-05)

The TAC adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

Attachments (0)