

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 18, 2021

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, March 18, 2021, via video conference/conference call.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Michael Fortner, City of Newark, and TAC Chair, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. TAC Members present:

Tricia Arndt, Delaware Office of State Planning
Ian Beam, Maryland Department of Transportation
Alexandra Brun, Maryland Department of the Environment
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning
Stacey Dahlstrom, New Castle County Department of Land Use
Michael Fortner, City of Newark
Gwinneeth Kaminsky, City of Wilmington Planning
Jeanne Minner, Town of Elkton
Brian Mitchell, City of Wilmington Department of Public Works
Derrick Sexton, Maryland State Highway Administration
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

TAC Ex-Officio Members present:

Lindsey Donnellon, U.S. Federal Highway Administration

TAC Members absent:

Cecil County Department of Public Works
Delaware Department of Transportation
Delaware Division of Small Business, Development, and Tourism
Delaware River and Bay Authority
DNREC
Maryland Transit Administration

TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:

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

Guests and Invitees:

Tyson Byrne, MDOT
Nicholas Cannistraci, Town of Elkton
Bill Dunn, Civic League for New Castle County
Diane Gunn, Century Engineering

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

Mr. David Dahlstrom said the date on the first line of the February 18, 2021 minutes needs to be corrected.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Ian Beam and seconded by Ms. Gwinneeth Kaminsky the TAC approved the February 18, 2021 TAC minutes with correction.

Motion passed.

(03-18-21 - 01)

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

None.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

ACTION ITEMS

None.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

6. Downtown Wilmington Transit Improvements

Ms. Diane Gunn of Century Engineering said she works as the Project Manager for DeIDOT under Pam Steinbach who is the Chief of North Project Development at DeIDOT. This was a Wilmington Initiatives project. The purpose of the project is to improve transit corridors in the central business district using the corridors that are most used in Wilmington, which are Orange Street, King Street, 8th Street, and 9th Street. In addition to that, Orange Street between Martin Luther King Boulevard and 10th Street will be reconfigured, so there will be some paving operations to install that new reconfiguration. To improve the transit stops, the curb would be brought out into the parking area to create bump outs. Orange Street would also be reconfigured so it would be only one lane instead of two lanes. The bus shelters will be a new design with a thinner footprint in areas that have some ADA compliance issues, while also giving shelter to riders. Some of the shelters that are there now do not have sides or backs to protect riders from weather. Real time signs will be installed at shelters to provide information to the riders such as the route number and when the bus will arrive at that stop. The signs will be powered by solar where it is feasible, though it may not be feasible for shelters in the shadow of buildings. In those cases they would be directly wired to keep them operational.

DelTech's improvements are from Martin Luther King Boulevard to 4th Street. Parking will be moved from the west side of the road to the east side. DelTech currently uses 3rd Street to park shuttle buses that run between their Stanton and Wilmington campuses. A bus pull off will be

provided directly in front of the main entrance of their campus, so the pedestrians do not have to cross Orange Street. An oversized stop sign will be installed at 3rd Street to emphasize to drivers that they have to stop. This area has a lot of pedestrian traffic and, unfortunately, there was a fatality a few years ago partly because the cars were parked on parking lot side of the street and a student was walking through the parked cars and was hit. The distance to cross there will be reduced with the installation a bump out. Further along toward 4th Street there is another DART bus stop, where a new shelter will be placed. There are two through lanes there, but that lane will continue to 4th Street, then after 4th Street it will be reduced to one lane.

The northern end of Orange Street will have one travel lane from 5th Street to 9th Street with parking on both sides of the road. Then, bump outs will be at some of the bus stops with real time signs if possible. On King Street all of the bus stops will remain in the same locations, but the shelters will be replaced with the new style shelters, real time signs will be installed, and the bump outs will be constructed at all the stops. Some of the bus locations on 9th Street will be changing, and some will have new-style shelters and some benches, depending on the ridership at each stop. Bump outs will be constructed at four of the seven stops there and real time signs installed where they fit and where the ridership is higher. On 8th Street, some of the bus stops will be changing with installation the new-style shelters, and benches. Bumpouts are being constructed at six of the eight stops there and real time signs where possible.

Parking is an issue in Wilmington. Because Orange Street is going to be one lane, forty-two spaces will be gained there. On King Street, no parking is lost, because existing bus stop locations are being used. On 9th Street two spaces will be gained. On 8th Street, one space will be lost. Overall, it is an improvement with forty-three spaces gained, and all of the loading zones in front of businesses were maintained. The project is in design right now, which will continue into the fall. Advertising will begin in the fall of 2021 and construction should begin in spring of 2022. The project team will coordinate with the Restore the Corridor project. A public workshop is being planned for late April or early May of this year to present it to the public.

Ms. Tigist Zegeye commented this came out of the Wilmington Initiatives a very long time ago. King and Orange Streets have been in the TIP for many years so kudos to the City and DelDOT for moving this project forward.

Mr. Mike Fortner asked with narrowing the street down to one lane, parking on both sides and bumpouts if there will be sharrows for bicyclists. Ms. Gunn replied that there is no bicycle lane on Orange Street, but she is working on two other projects in Wilmington where they are instituting bicycle ways. Ms. Gwinn Kaminsky added there initially was one iteration of Orange Street where bikes were considered in combination with a contraflow bus lane, but we moved on from that idea and the cycling lanes were dropped. Mr. Brian Mitchell said we did not want to mix bikes with the buses. Bike Wilmington folks have a plan with north-south routes for bike traffic. There are plans to address bicycling in a north-south direction, just not on Orange Street.

Mr. David Dahlstrom asked if there is a need to maintain all of the delivery zones. Is there a need to have more than one per block? Ms. Gunn replied that most of the loading zones on Orange Street are where there are a couple of businesses closer to 10th Street and the project just maintains what is out there. The team was careful not to place bus stops where there were loading zones. There are not too many, but there are some in front of the businesses.

7. FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said staff is putting together the draft FY 2022 UPWP. WILMAPCO receives federal funds from Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration to support transportation planning, and 20% state or local funds to match the federal funds is required. This match can be in cash or in in-kind services. The agreed upon commitments for this year from our member agencies are: \$12,803 from the State of Maryland (from MDOT); \$4,400 from Cecil County; \$416,817 from the State of Delaware (from DeIDOT); \$31,500 from New Castle County; and \$11,796 from the City of Wilmington, which is split between the Department of Planning and the Department of Public Works in the City of Wilmington.

Based on what is received from our member agencies and federal share, the cost share and cash share for the State of Delaware is \$2,300,565. For the State of Maryland, the cost share is \$128,028, with a cash share of \$119,625. Cecil County does provide \$8,403 worth of in-kind share. The total for the FY 2022 UPWP cost share is \$2,428,593, with a cash share of \$2,420,190 and the in-kind is \$8,403.

Using those funds, the WILMAPCO staff is proposing a funding outline for thirteen tasks. A substantial amount of money was put on MPO 22.13, which is the Monitoring of Sub-Regional Studies Implementation; followed by Sub-Regional Studies and Coordination; and then Administration, which includes the staff time and all the committee staffing that is done at WILMAPCO; and then the Regional Planning and Technical Analysis.

Most of the work is done in house by staff. However, this year we are proposing about \$600,000 for consultant costs, and this is included in the cash activity. On the Consultant Costs List, the first eight tasks are performed every year. Bookkeeping is for a CPA hired to review staff work and specifically review the monthly billing that is sent to MDOT and DeIDOT for payment. Two relatively small amounts are budgeted for the Urban Bike Project and the Newark Bike Project. These are important for school children education with the Safe Routes to School program and Safe Kids Delaware, supporting our public outreach and education in the City of Wilmington and the City of Newark. The next five are the Region Wide Intersection Counts, the Regional Modeling Support, Congestion Management System Consultant Support, University of Delaware Park & Ride Data Collection, and the Regional Transportation Performance Measurement Development. These are the basis for most of the work at WILMAPCO.

The remainder of the proposed tasks are new to the FY 2022 UPWP. Staff is proposing to include \$30,000 for the Transportation Justice Analysis to fulfill recommendations from the 2019 Transportation Justice Plan to explore fixed route public transit improvements within neighborhoods with majority Black population, food deserts, and impoverished neighborhoods. It is intended that analysis will be done at the neighborhood and system-wide level. We are proposing to work on this with the WILMAPCO Transportation Justice Working Group and in close coordination with the DTC staff. The Delaware Freight Plan Update supports DeIDOT to update the 2017 Statewide Freight Plan. It is a requirement per the FAST Act that the DOT develop or update the plan. This is due in FY 2022. The proposed \$50,000 is a contribution to the bigger task that will be done using DeIDOT's funds, and the Dover-Kent MPO will be contributing to this effort as well. The Wilmington Initiatives Support continues work that has been done since 1996 including public outreach, management assistance, and interagency coordination. We are proposing \$45,000 for that. The I-95 Cap Feasibility Study is the next new task. Nationwide, many cities are making caps over highways and utilizing the found space for parks, recreational purposes, and other creative development. So, the proposal is for WILMAPCO to work in partnership with the City of Wilmington and DeIDOT to explore the feasibility of creating a cap over I-95 from Delaware Avenue to 6th Street. Public outreach will be

a crucial element as there is a grass roots movement in Wilmington to convert vehicle bridges over I-95 to pedestrian space. Staff would lead the study, provide technical guidance and support to our partners, and explore reconnecting the neighborhood where the highway divided it. Staff is proposing \$100,000 be budgeted for consultant support. Staff will be preparing a request for proposal with the City of Wilmington, DelDOT, and other stakeholders. Similar work done elsewhere in the country will be carefully reviewed, for example the I-95 cap at Penn's Landing in Philadelphia, the one near the Arch in St. Louis, and a project in Dallas, Texas. The University of Delaware had a visioning exercise presented to neighborhood groups and elected officials a couple of months ago. The remainder of the projects under 22.13, Monitoring of Sub-Regional Studies, are tasks for projects that have been recently completed or adopted by Council. This includes the US 202 Corridor Master Plan, the Route 9 Corridor Master Plan, the Southern New Castle County Master Plan, the North Claymont Area Master Plan, the Newport Transportation Plan, the Governor Printz Boulevard Corridor Study, and the Churchmans Crossing Plan Update, which will be completed fall of 2021. Staff proposes that WILMAPCO provide monitoring support for these projects to ensure plan implementation. This monitoring support may include a monitoring committee for each, which would include member agencies, community stakeholders, and elected officials as appropriate. This would provide consultant support to monitor changing transportation and land use patterns. There may be an opportunity to develop local priorities that feed projects into the TIP and the CTP. Each area is unique, but this provides a mechanism to implement recommendations from these plans and studies.

This was presented to the Council at the March 11th meeting. There will be a thirty-day public comment period from April 1st to May 3rd. Hopefully, a draft UPWP will be brought to TAC for approval in April. Council approval is scheduled for May 13th. When approved, it will be submitted to DelDOT, MDOT, FHWA, FTA in May, and then implemented on July 1, 2021.

8. Southbridge Neighborhood Plan

Mr. Bill Swiatek said the Southbridge Neighborhood Action Plan comes out of Healthy Communities Delaware, the South Wilmington Planning Network, and Southbridge Civic Association. The area is the southern part of the City of Wilmington, on the South Wilmington Peninsula. There is a planned wetlands park next door as well as the Christina Landing development nearby. This plan is focused on the neighborhood of Southbridge and some of the surrounding area. The task overall is to update a plan from 2006. The partners are the South Wilmington Planning Network, which is a government, non-profit, and community coalition that operates in Southbridge, and the Southbridge Civic Association. Funding is from Healthy Communities Delaware as a \$50,000 grant to do this work this year. The consultant is Asakura Robinson, who has done great work in New Orleans and Minneapolis, but this is the first time they are working in Delaware. The 2006 Neighborhood Plan had many great recommendations. The last time the network looked at the progress made on these was in 2014 and about 65% of the plan was already completed. It was quite dated, but many of the recommendations did move forward, like the Southbridge Wetlands Park, which is becoming a nationally recognized as a way to improve upon a wetlands area. Located next to Southbridge for flood retention, it also provides a community space that connects it with the riverfront. There were a lot of discussions about housing affordability requirements that did not move forward, and local jobs agreements with developers that moved forward a little but not really. Transportation improvements is something that WILMAPCO has worked on in Southbridge. This study was followed by a 2008 circulation study, implementation with streetscape projects, and signage to cut down on illegal truck movements. Some of these have progressed and some have not. This study will also build off the recommendations in the 2028 Wilmington Comprehensive Plan, which set out a high-level vision for development across the city, and made specific recommendations by

neighborhood, including South Wilmington. We want to take those high-level recommendations and make action steps to realize some of them.

Because the neighborhood plan is funded by Healthy Communities Delaware, health and wellness will be a central theme. The project team wants to strengthen the foundation of wellness in the neighborhood around the social determinants of health, like education, housing, health care, walkability, and social and community cohesion. The steering committee guiding the work is a mix of residents working with WILMAPCO, the University of Delaware, non-profits, and the City of Wilmington. The eight civic representatives, including a youth representative, are being paid stipends to participate on this steering committee and that has helped to get better and more consistent participation.

The project timeline is divided into three phases. The project is currently at the end of Phase 1, which is to understand. The project team has an existing conditions report, hosted workshops with steering committee members, did a public workshop, interviews, and has a survey which is being rolled out now. The online version is already live, then paid residents will be in field next month. Phase 2, the envision phase, is when recommendations, the mission and vision statements will be developed. A second survey will be conducted that goes over the priorities of those recommendations with residents. Over the summer, the final phase will be finalizing the recommendations, putting that draft report together and having workshops to publicize it.

The census boundary is becoming problematic with the development to the west. Southbridge is counted with all of South Wilmington in the tract 19.02. Since the early 2000, is the Riverfront district has grown so now Christina Landing residents live in this census tract, and more development is planned along south Market Street. The difference in the neighborhoods in terms of social class skews the data for both Southbridge and Christina Landing. This is a concern as the needs in Southbridge are not being illustrated by census data, which impacts things like whether or not this area is a tech desert. Southbridge was not listed as a tech desert in the WILMAPCO report a few months ago, though in all practicality it is. This also affects things like opportunity zones as an area like this shows up as an opportunity zone because of the low-income population in Southbridge. The project team is looking to hopefully better delineate the census boundaries by creating a third block group in the tract to better define Southbridge from the development to the west. There is some elevated poverty, within the census tract with about 30% in poverty, and that is pre-pandemic. Also seen in the tract is high unemployment rates and a population that is much more bus dependent than the average neighborhood in the region. The surrounding industrial land poses challenges with toxins, some of which have been cleaned up with the Wetlands Park but much of it remains. There is a lot of vacant land which can be seen as a liability, but also provides opportunities to use that space.

People love Southbridge's strong sense of community and identity. People also love the Southbridge Wetlands Park, which is great because initially people did not want it. As people saw the renderings and what it could do for flooding, it is now a source of community pride. Other sources of pride include the neighborhood institutions such as the medical center and community center, and a generally low crime rate compared to other parts of the city. Some of the challenges that Southbridge faces are flooding and sea level rise. It is one of the most impacted neighborhoods in the state in terms of sea level rise. Some of that flooding will be controlled by the Wetlands Park project, but sea level rise will eventually overrun that. Another challenge is finding agreement on issues, which is an issue everywhere when you have different opinions, and there is hope that the planning process will bring agreement on a path forward for the community. A challenge is pockets and perceptions of crime. Crime does occur at a few places like the Wilmington Housing Authority site and needs to be deterred. Access to education

and development and changes to the neighborhood are real challenges. There is a lot of development around Southbridge, and we want to ensure the community benefits from it, and there are no displacements. Those are key things on the minds of the residents.

Emerging priorities include equitable development, such as making development happen in a value-neutral or beneficial way for the community. Affordable living and quality housing was proposed in the 2006 plan but really did not see movement. Supporting and strengthening local entrepreneurship, resilience to flooding, and improved mobility, are part of continuing the work in the existing transportation projects in Southbridge. More than a quarter of the people in Southbridge are living in households without cars. Traffic calming and healthy streets are needed. The third phase of a streetscaping project was proposed for TAP funding, but the team is hearing that Heald Street, New Castle Avenue, and A Street are dangerous streets to cross, so it may be necessary to look for other ways to slow traffic, while enhancing the beautification efforts begun by those streetscape projects. Southbridge has a relationship with the Port of Wilmington, so reducing truck traffic is key. Many businesses are truck generators on Garisches Lane and Christiana Avenue, and some of those trucks go through Southbridge legally or illegally. Some companies use side streets like Claymont Street, which should be discouraged. Then, a lot of truck volume generally moves up and down these arterials. Supporting current projects at WILMAPCO that may reduce some of the truck volume on these streets and on A Street would be good for the community. Finally, connectivity is key. Southbridge is somewhat isolated from the rest of the city. It would be beneficial to look at pedestrian and bicycle connections to the north and also to the south to connect to Eden Park, and the Riverfront area. The A Street Pathway that is being built now as well as the Wetlands Park Trail. Then perhaps a multi-use path or new road to the south can connect to the Chase Center.

The survey is online. Administrators will go door to door with a short-form survey and leave the long-form, mail-back option next month. There are quotas by neighborhood quadrant to include different parts of the community, especially rental units which tend to be underrepresented. The five administrators are Southbridge residents including one youth, and they are going to be supported by four teens from the Warehouse in Wilmington. We want to get something on the ground soon after this study. The local priority is revitalization of Hicks Park. The South Wilmington Planning Network had a grant a few years ago and came up with a \$500,000 plan to revitalize the park by resurfacing the courts and adding new playground equipment, which connects into that Transportation Alternative Program to enhance walkability in the area. Most of this project is not funded right now. We did set aside about \$5000 from the current planning grant to use on implementation. We have about \$80,000 that has been earmarked to potentially go into this, but we really want to use our next injection of Healthy Communities Delaware funding, which will be about \$100,000, to move this forward and show progress early.

In the chat, Ms. Tricia Arndt asked if Mr. Swiatek has heard if the wetland park is helping with flooding, either documented or anecdotally. Mr. Swiatek replied he has not heard. According to the projections it will help with up to two feet of sea level rise in most of the neighborhood, but a portion of the neighborhood on the east side would not be helped, so there is a need to have other flood remediation projects like rain gardens and other options to support that.

INFORMATION ITEMS

9. Staff Report

Ms. Dunigan reported the following updates:

- Council met on March 11th. Council voted to certify the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process for FY 2022. They voted to approve the Project Prioritization for the TAP project

submissions, which was forwarded to DeIDOT for help prioritizing statewide and to assess which projects can be funded with the TAP program. Council voted to approve a new member of PAC, who is a University of Delaware student and member the New Castle County Youth Planning Board.

- The Churchmans Crossing Plan had a second workshop on March 3rd. Fifty-one people attended. The meeting reviewed various transportation and land use scenarios that will be used in the modeling process as well as some initial modelling results.
- Staff is participating in the Maryland State Rail Plan Advisory Committee meetings.
- Staff presented alongside Broward County MPO at an AMPO event on how to reach hard to reach communities webinar on March 8th.
- The Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee will be meeting this afternoon.
- A focus group for the Statewide Truck Parking Study was held on March 11th. It was attended by several people from the business and industry representatives from across the state. A Wikimap is on the WILMAPCO website to leave comments on truck parking issues.
- A public workshop for the Port Area Truck Alternatives Study will be on March 24th. Registration is available on the WILMAPCO website.
- Air Quality Partnership, Delaware Commute Solutions (formerly Rideshare Delaware), DeIDOT, Nemours, and Urban Bike Project are planning Transportation Tuesday on April 20th as part of the Wilmington Earth Day events. This will include bicycle and pedestrian safety, bike maintenance education, and a panel discussion.
- WILMAPCO staff has scheduled social justice training. The five training sessions will be conducted in coordination with APA Delaware and the University of Delaware starting on April 16th. Ms. Randi Novakoff shared the flyer through chat. Please sign up if you are interested. Space is limited.
- On March 15th staff will participate in a WTS webinar.
- Staff continues to participate in the New Castle County Deep Dive Sessions for the Comprehensive Plan.
- Staff will present on bicycle/pedestrian planning at the MASITE Conference on March 24th.
- Staff has been working with a coalition in the City of Wilmington to plan a series of Open Street Events, where the street is closed to allow people to walk and bicycle in a socially distanced way. The first one is April 24th on Market Street.
- Staff is working with the City of Newark and Bike Newark on activities for a Virtual Bike Month, which will encourage people to bike independently and share their experiences.
- The City of New Castle Transportation Plan continues to have a survey and Wikimap on the website to get input for the visioning process.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Tricia Arndt and seconded by Ms. Gwinneth Kaminsky the TAC adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

Motion passed.

(03-18-21 - 02)

The TAC adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

Attachments (0)