

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 21, 2024

A joint meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Air Quality Subcommittee was held on Thursday, March 21, 2024, 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 10:04 a.m.

2. TAC Members present:

Samantha Bulkivish, Delaware Office of State Planning
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning
Taylor Englert, DNREC
Dan Janousek, Maryland Department of Transportation
Gwinneth Kaminsky Rivera, City of Wilmington Planning
Quinn Krenzel, Town of Elkton Planning
Matt Rogers, 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:

Cecil County
City of Newark
City of Wilmington Department of Public Works
Delaware Department of Transportation
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:

James Coverdale, DNREC
Jeanne Minner, Town of Elkton
Sina Zabihi, MDOT, Consultant

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 February 15, 2024, TAC Meeting Minutes.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. David Dahlstrom and seconded by Ms. Gwinneth Kaminsky Rivera, the February 15, 2024, TAC Minutes are approved.

Motion passed.

(03-21-24-01)

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

None.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

ACTION ITEMS

6. To Recommend endorsement of the 2024 Inter-Regional Report

Mr. Jacob Thompson presented the 2024 Inter-regional report, which serves as a data-oriented summary of demographic changes and travel characteristics for a 28-county study area centered on the WILMAPCO region.

This report, updated periodically since 2004, with the last update in 2018, utilizes recent data from sources such as the US Census Bureau, Federal Highway Administration, MPOs, county planning departments, and transit providers. It contains detailed maps and analysis, including current and future projections for population and employment change, traffic volumes, volume-to-capacity ratios, commute patterns, freight movement, regional transit routes, portable transit score, low-income and minority populations, transportation investment areas, inter-regional projects, and analysis of key corridors.

The report highlights significant population and employment growth by 2050 and increases in traffic if no changes are made to the transportation system. It emphasizes that improved transit in the region will offer more accessible, frequent, and efficient transportation options. The report concludes with recommendations, including expanding intercounty transit services, continuing interagency coordination, and supporting local land uses while limiting urban growth.

The draft 2024 Inter-regional report has undergone review by the Technical Advisory Committee, Public Advisory Committee, Non-Motorized Transportation Working Group, and WILMAPCO Council. This latest draft incorporates edits received from each of these committees. Mr. Thompson invited questions or comments from the attendees.

Mr. David Dahlstrom raised several points for consideration. Initially, he inquired about the reference in the report stating that the urbanized area extends from Elkton to Pennsylvania,

suggesting it might be more appropriate to specify that it extends from the Susquehanna to Pennsylvania, considering the layout of the Route 40 corridor in Cecil County. Mr. Thompson acknowledged this and mentioned that the description could be updated to reflect the area extending up to the river.

Mr. Dahlstrom further suggested including Perryville in the description to avoid confusion about the starting point of the urbanized area. He also noted discrepancies in the regional map, where Queen Anne's County and Kent Island were missing from the graphic, despite being part of the region. Additionally, he highlighted concerns about the population growth percentages versus the actual number of people, particularly in Cecil County, and questioned the significant increase in growth in the northwest corner of Cecil County.

In response, Mr. Thompson acknowledged the significance of the 33% growth rate in Cecil County but agreed that it would be beneficial to provide context by also highlighting areas with the largest raw growth numbers. He assured Mr. Dahlstrom that he would investigate the inclusion of Queen Anne's County and Kent Island in the regional map.

Regarding Mr. Dahlstrom's concern about the urbanized area's projected growth, Mr. Thompson mentioned the challenge of finding more recent publications to update the information, acknowledging that growth management initiatives might have influenced the expansion of designated growth areas since the last report.

Lastly, Mr. Dan Janousek expressed his interest in the interregional projects map, noting its significance. He mentioned ongoing efforts at MDOT to foster discussions with counties in the state regarding regional coordination and priorities. Mr. Janousek emphasized the importance of enhancing the current process for gathering priorities from each county and appreciated the clarity provided by the map, illustrating major projects in the area with regional significance.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Samantha Bulkivish, seconded by Ms. Gwineth Kaminsky, TAC approved the Inter-regional report with the edits mentioned by Mr. David Dahlstrom.

Motion passed.

(03-21-24-02)

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

7. FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program

Ms. Tigist Zegeye commenced the presentation by expressing her surprise at discussing the FY2025 work program and proceeded to provide an overview of the funding sources for the program. She highlighted that the total funding amounted to approximately \$3.7 million, with federal contributions from the Delaware side at \$3.6 million and \$163,000 from the Maryland side.

Ms. Zegeye detailed the project submitted by New Castle County, which aimed to update the comp plan and regional transportation plan strategic action plan. The requested funding amount for this project was \$100,000. She indicated that staff recommended including this amount in the FY25 UPWP and collaborating with New Castle County staff to develop the scope of work. Moving on to DelDOT's submission, Ms. Zegeye explained that the project focused on the Augustine Cutoff corridor's bicycle and pedestrian network improvement, specifically phase two.

The requested funding ranged between \$100,000 to \$150,000. Staff recommended allocating \$100,000 in FY25 and collaborating with DelDOT to finalize the scope of work.

Ms. Zegeye elaborated on another project from DeIDOT, which involved conducting a visibility study for the Rocky Run pathway underpass. The project aimed to assess the feasibility of converting one of the three culverts under Route 202 into a shared-use pathway. The requested funding for this project was approximately \$100,000. Staff recommended including \$100,000 in the FY25 UPWP and collaborating with DeIDOT on the scope of work.

The next project highlighted by Ms. Zegeye was submitted by Cecil County and involved conducting a corridor study for Route 272. The project aimed to evaluate existing traffic patterns, propose and evaluate alternatives, identify potential multimodal improvements, and enhance connectivity to East Coast greenways and other low-income communities. The requested funding for this project was \$250,000. Staff recommended allocating \$125,000 in FY25 and coordinating with Cecil County to develop the scope of work.

Lastly, Ms. Zegeye discussed a joint submission from DeIDOT and New Castle County to update the first and final mile freight network. The project aimed to update technical aspects of the network and ensure consistency with county comprehensive plans. The requested funding for this project was \$75,000. Staff recommended including \$100,000 in the FY25 UPWP and coordinating with DeIDOT and New Castle County on the scope of work.

8. East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan

Mr. Bill Swiatek introduced an updated presentation on the East Elkton Study. He mentioned the upcoming public workshop scheduled for Wednesday March 27, where they would review some of the alternatives developed for the study. He explained that the study area extended from the Delaware border into the eastern part of Elkton, covering three corridors: Belle Hill Rd., Muddy Lane, and Delancey Rd. Mr. Swiatek highlighted the diverse steering committee guiding the work, which included local representatives from the Elkton Chamber of Commerce, Cecil County, the Schools, Police Department, and other interest groups like Greenway and Elkton Alliance, as well as MDOT and WILMAPCO.

Mr. Swiatek outlined the planning process, indicating that they had already completed the existing conditions work and the visioning phase. Currently, they are developing and identifying recommendations. Mr. Swiatek mentioned the ongoing survey to gather feedback on the alternatives and the upcoming workshop. He emphasized the community-driven nature of the planning process, which included two surveys, two youth surveys, and public workshops. Additionally, they were targeting engagement in transportation justice areas within the study area.

Mr. Swiatek discussed the results of the recent youth survey, highlighting the emphasis on bike and pedestrian needs. He shared some comments from students, expressing their desire for safer ways to travel, such as biking and walking, between neighborhoods and schools. He mentioned plans to address bike and pedestrian connectivity in the workshop, including trail and pathway connections.

The presentation continued with a focus on the alternatives for Delancey Road, Mr. Swiatek explained proposals for adding a center turn lane and improving bike and pedestrian facilities. He discussed options for addressing safety concerns at intersections and presented two innovative proposals for improving traffic flow, including a barrier to block left turns and a connector road behind the Royal Farms intersecting on Route 40. He also mentioned plans to upgrade nearby parkland.

Regarding Muddy Lane, Mr. Swiatek outlined proposals for bike and pedestrian facilities and discussed options for improving safety at the underpass of the Amtrak rail line. He presented two proposals for realigning the road to improve traffic flow and safety.

For Belle Hill Road, Mr. Swiatek explained proposals for bike and pedestrian amenities and highlighted options for improving safety at the intersection with Route 279. He discussed plans to discourage truck traffic and slow vehicle speeds with various treatments.

Mr. Swiatek mentioned the ongoing survey to gather public feedback on the alternatives and encouraged participation through the project website. He concluded by inviting questions from the audience.

Ms. Samantha Bulkivish inquired about the connection to Appleton Road, expressing intrigue regarding how truck drivers currently access it. She questioned whether there was an alternative route for them if they couldn't use Belleville Rd. Mr. Swiatek responded, explaining that while there might not be significant truck movement to Appleton Rd. currently, the proposed connection would provide an additional option for accessing the property from Appleton Rd. It could potentially alleviate congestion at the intersection by offering an alternative route for certain cases.

9. FY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program

Ms. Heather Dunigan began by stating that she provided a brief overview of the presentation at the last TAC meeting. However, she noted that she had only received the DeIDOT information the day before the meeting. Therefore, the presentation reflected what she had just received. The council had voted to release the information for public comment, which was scheduled to occur from March 6th through at least May 6th, with the possibility of extending it to May 16th. A public workshop was scheduled for April 16th at WILMAPCO, where attendees could interact with DeIDOT staff to discuss project details. Another workshop is being planned for early May in the Middletown area, prompting a potential extension of the public comment period, and rescheduling of the council meeting to allow more time for feedback.

In terms of funding, there was a notable shift towards multimodal projects, with the largest share allocated to such initiatives. This represented a departure from previous years, where more funds were directed towards roadway-only projects. Preservation of existing infrastructure remained a priority, with a significant portion of funding allocated for this purpose. Cecil County's share of funding remained small, while the Delaware statewide portion continued to increase, raising concerns about transparency within New Castle County. Additionally, there was a slight shift away from heavy reliance on state funding, with federal funding now comprising nearly half of the total.

New projects included the Diamond State Rail Line Study, which is from Wilmington or Newark to Dover, Harrington, and Berlin to Salisbury. The single-lane roundabout conversions, intersection conversions in Bear Road and Reybold Drive, Bunker Hill Road Drive/Merrimac Avenue, and St. Annes Church Road. Implementation of the Governor Printz Blvd. Road Diet, the Hares Corner project, Sears Blvd. Extension, improvements along US 40, and the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program. These projects aimed to address various transportation challenges and improve connectivity within the region. Ms. Dunigan concluded the presentation by inviting questions from the audience.

Mr. Matthew Rogers commenced the WILMAPCO staff for the initiatives and efforts on organizing a secondary TIP Public Comment Workshop in Middletown.

INFORMATION ITEMS

10. Staff Report

Ms. Heather Dunigan reported the following updates:

- Council met on March 14, and reviewed six TIP amendments and two presentations. Additionally, the Council voted on the release of the TIP for public comment period with a request for a secondary location at SNCC.
- On February 21st Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan Scenario Workshop was held at the Cranston Heights Fire Company Hall with about 60 attendees
- On February 22nd staff participated in the Council on Transportation Meeting.
- On February 22nd staff provided pedestrian safety instruction at Downes Elementary School during their Family Night, with about 30 students participating.
- On February 26th—March 1st staff attended Downes Elementary safety week and participated in a safety station for 1st and 2nd grade a combined 111 students participating.
- On February 26th staff attended the kickoff for the DE State Rail Plan.
- On February 28th the Churchman’s Crossing Monitoring Committee met for their winter meeting with a spotlight on bike and pedestrian project analysis and prioritization.
- On February 29th the Claymont Area Master Plan Visioning Workshop was held Archmere Academy’s Patio with about 50 attendees.
- On March 15th staff participated in a focus group for the NCHRP research project.
- On March 18th staff presented at the University of Delaware, Epsilon eta fraternity on sustainable transportation planning.
- On March 20th the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee held a meeting.
- On March 20th the Wilmington Initiatives held their most recent meeting discussing the Adams and Jackson Street Traffic Calming and Multimodal Improvement projects of which the public outreach has been scheduled with a workshop for March 27 and a stakeholders meeting was held on March 18th.
- On March 21st the Route 9 Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On March 27th the East Elkton Traffic Circulation will host a second workshop at the Public Library.
- On March 28th the South Claymont Monitoring Committee will have a Planning Charrette.
- On April 1st the South Claymont Master Project will have a planning committee meeting.
- On April 2nd the Ardens Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On April 4th the Air Quality Subcommittee will meet.
- On April 16th staff will be hosting the TIP Public Workshop at WILMAPCO. Secondary date and location TBD
- On April 17th staff will be participating in the Delaware Safety Summit.
- On April 18th—19th staff will be presenting at the Delaware Equity Summit. Registration links are available upon request.
- On the Newport Train Station update staff assisted DelDOT and DTC on developing the RFP.
- Staff continue to work on the FRA FY2024 grant for the Diamond State line initiative and the scope of studies for rail passengers.

- The Southbridge Transportation Action Plan, Reducing Truck Traffic in the Southbridge Neighborhood: A Feasibility Study of Alternative, More Efficient Routes has been funded \$300,000 through the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program.
- \$2 million dollars were approved for the I-95 CAP.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Attachments (0)