

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

May 21, 2020

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, May 21, 2020, via video conference/conference call.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Heather Dunigan, WILMAPCO, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:02 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
Marvina Cephas, DNREC
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning
Stacey Dahlstrom, New Castle County Department of Land Use
Michael Fortner, City of Newark
Stephen Miller, Maryland State Highway Administration
Jeanne Minner, Town of Elkton
Steve O'Connor, Cecil County Land Use
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

TAC Ex-Officio Members present:

TAC Members absent:

City of Wilmington Department of Public Works
City of Wilmington Planning
Delaware Division of Small Business, Development, and Tourism
Delaware River and Bay Authority
Maryland Department of the Environment
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, Maryland Department of Transportation
Virginia Burke, MDOT
Jane Dille, League of Women's Voters
Kevin Racine
Derrick Sexton, MDOT SHA
Jolyon Shelton, DNREC

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, Transportation Planner
Dawn Voss, Administrative Assistant
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by: Dawn Voss

3. MINUTES

The April 16, 2020 TAC minutes were approved.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Ian Beam and seconded by Mr. Cooper Bowers the TAC approved the April 16, 2020 TAC minutes.

Motion passed.

(05-21-20 - 01)

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

a. Air Quality Subcommittee

Mr. Bill Swiatek said the Air Quality Subcommittee held a special meeting on April 23rd. The group discussed a proposed amendment to the Cecil County TIP; the replacement of the Belvidere Road Bridge over the CSX railroad and its potential to trigger a revised conformity analysis. FHWA and EPA asked for more information about the project before providing their opinion about it. These details were put together following the meeting and we expect to revisit the discussion at our next meeting, scheduled for June 4.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

6. Appointment of Nominating Committee for TAC Chair

Mr. David Dahlstrom said because the chair of the TAC rotates, a nominating committee of at least three people needs to be appointed. Mr. Dahlstrom asked for volunteers, otherwise, he will have to select members. The Nominating Committee will have a brief conference call to nominate a chair and vice chair. Mr. Ian Beam volunteered. Mr. Dahlstrom nominated Ms. Catherine Smith and Ms. Tricia Arndt for the committee. Ms. Dunigan will send an email to committee members to assist in coordinating the nomination of a chair and vice chair. Ms. Dunigan offered to assist with the conference call or any other WILMAPCO resources they may need.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

7. WILMAPCO Project Prioritization Process

Ms. Dunigan said the prioritization process was last amended in 2016. As new reports are adopted and changes are made to the long-range plan, it is important to revisit the process periodically to ensure the most recent information is considered when selecting projects. There are four steps in the prioritization process. Staff has suggested adding language to make clear that the transportation investment areas will be used to screen projects for their eligibility.

The suggested changes to the criteria divided among the three goals of the long-range plan are:

Improve Quality of Life,

- In the Air Quality criteria, the wording “Non-recreational Nonmotorized System” was changed to “Nonmotorized Transportation System” to reflect that projects should have a transportation benefit.
- The Environmental Justice criteria was changed in accordance with recommendations from the recently adopted Environmental and Transportation Justice Report. Changes in the project prioritization process for the environmental justice and mobility-challenged populations as well as project scoring was taken from that report. The change in process increases scores in areas where the demographic concentration of EJ population is not receiving the amount of funding that would be expected.
- Criteria was added for social determinants of health, which was also identified through the Transportation Justice Report. This criteria scores projects based on health concerns that are anticipated by demographics, high school graduation rates, employment, home ownership, as well as food deserts.

Efficiently Transport People

- The title of the “Transportation Justice” criteria was changed to “Mobility Challenged” and wording was changed to clarify what that population includes and to match wording found in the Transportation Justice Report.

Support Economic Development and Goods Movement.

- This scoring system was changed so the total points would be similar to the other goals. The freight score was adjusted to give five points instead of four on significant bottlenecks.
- In the Support Economic Development Initiatives, Delaware State strategies had been used in Maryland and Cecil County priority funding areas and Cecil County certified areas. It is suggested that the Center and Core Transportation Investment Areas (TIA) from the long-range plan be used to tie this back to a WILMAPCO document. The scoring has been increased from three to six for a Center TIA and from one to three for a Core TIA.

Mr. David Dahlstrom noted that the freight bottleneck criteria seemed to be based on traffic volumes and asked why it did not cite travel time delay. Mr. Blevins replied that the bottleneck data considered five or six factors including overall truck percentages. It considers volumes and also travel time delay. Ms. Dunigan said the descriptions of the bottlenecks refers to travel time delays, so that can be added to the descriptions of each of the scoring factors as well.

Ms. Dunigan said the scoring process will not be used until next spring so it will be brought back to TAC for adoption, then to Council for approval.

8. Transit Impacts of Covid-19

Mr. Bill Swiatek presented an analysis of the bus impacts of COVID-19, its impact on ridership and its impacts on vulnerable groups in our region. Public transit agencies have been challenged by the pandemic. There is a dichotomy that they must balance. On the one hand, buses are a channel for spread of virus because they are public, confined spaces. In some parts of the world, public transit has been discouraged. The British transport minister announced it is a civic duty to avoid buses. Here, there have been efforts to reduce crowding on the buses and other restrictions have been put in place. On the other hand, buses are an essential form of

transportation, particularly for vulnerable groups in our society. Transit agencies have had to deal with pandemics in the past. One hundred years ago, during the last major pandemic, the world dealt with the same challenges such as avoiding crowding and keeping buses clean and operational for the people who need them.

DART reduced daily runs to 38% capacity, running a modified Saturday service before the May 17th service change. After the May 17th service change, DART increased service to 66% of capacity. The bus is free of charge. Physical distancing and face coverings are required on the buses. Extra timing buses are running for busier routes to maintain social distancing. People from out of state or who have been exposed to the virus are asked not to ride. Cecil Transit is also running a reduced service. The Elkton-Newark line and the commuter connection are not running. The Glasgow inter-county is operational, but as demand response only, so the public must call to ask for a ride. There is no Saturday service. Face coverings are required and riders who have potentially been exposed to the virus are banned from the bus. Bus ridership in New Castle County is down about 75%, from approximately 500,000 riders per month prior to the pandemic to about 167,000 riders this past April. In Cecil County, ridership dropped from 5,500 riders before the pandemic to 1,700 in April.

To assess the coverage to vulnerable groups, service to food deserts and areas of social determinates of health concern were considered. Food deserts, which are low-income areas that are located too far from a supermarket, were evaluated for access and frequency on buses that have direct links to a supermarket. Areas of social determinates of health concern, which consider the conditions in which people live that impact health outcomes, were evaluated for access and frequency of all buses.

As reported in the New York Times, low-income groups are more mobile than higher-income during the pandemic. Tracking cell phones of approximately sixteen-million Americans shows the percentage of people sheltering in place. Prior to the pandemic, low-income populations were less mobile than higher-income populations. After the lockdown, both groups were more likely to stay at home, but high-income populations were more likely to stay home than low-income populations. Starting around March 23rd, 60% of higher-income residents were staying close to home versus only 50% of lower income residents.

Local food deserts were defined in our Transportation Justice Plan. The method used to identify them was based on the USDA's analysis but looking at block groups instead of census tracts and removing non-residential areas. In these food deserts 80% of households are in walking distance of a bus with direct access to a supermarket. In New Castle County less than half of the population is in walking distance of any bus stop. There are greater walking distances in suburban areas reflective the layout of the system and the layout of the communities. Frequency of buses was also reviewed. A good frequency route has a bus run every thirty minutes. We found 65% of households in food deserts had both an acceptable walk and a nearby route with good frequency. In suburban areas, frequency is about an hour. In Cecil County there is a food desert just to the west of Elkton. This area is low density with two to three hundred houses situated outside the one-mile walking threshold to the cross-county line on Route 40. Murray Manor, near Kirkwood Highway, is serviced by the Route 6 bus. The walk from the back of the trailer park to the bus stop is one mile. These are areas that should be evaluated to see if any adjustments are necessary and can be made to close these gaps.

Areas of social determinates of health concern were determined during our Route 9 planning process. With help from Nemours, an index was developed to identify these areas. Staff took that localized analysis and expanded it to the regional level. Areas of highest concern were then

analyzed, looking at access to any bus network, not just those with direct access to supermarkets. It was found 91% of households in the areas of highest concern are within walking distance of bus service. Also, 86% of household in the areas of highest concern had acceptable frequency and were within walking distance of bus service. Again, some suburban communities have challenges reaching those routes. In Cecil County, if only the cross-county connector is considered, 30% of households in Elkton that are of high social determinants of health concern are in walking distance of bus service, but the Glasgow route brings that percentage to 78%.

This information has been shared with DART and Cecil Transit. A data report may be completed after the pandemic is over, or as it continues, to continue looking at the available service and its impacts. The methodology developed here can also help recognize some of the recommendations from the Transportation Justice Plan to look closer at bus service and gaps that exist, particularly in the suburbs.

Mr. Dahlstrom asked if the one-mile distance to the bus stops was measured using a straight line or the pedestrian route. Mr. Swiatek replied it is a straight line. Aerial photos and Google Street View were used to check for barriers like train tracks or a tree line, which would modify the analysis, but the analysis does not consider the routing nor ADA.

9. Churchman's Crossing Plan Update

Mr. Dan Blevins presented the Churchman's Crossing Monitoring Update, which was completed with RK&K. In 2018 staff looked at a Churchman's Crossing plan from 1997. The monitoring effort for the plan had been stagnant since 2004. Funding was put aside in the UPWP to revisit this plan. The work on the task prior to the launch of the full update can be used as the current conditions portion of the upcoming study. The full study is available on the WILMAPCO website.

The original 1997 study was completed by DeIDOT, New Castle County and WILMAPCO. The purpose of the study was to enhance quality of life, sustainable growth and provide transportation options. The partners were community leaders, elected officials, and business leaders. The large study area was from Pike Creek to Route 40, into Newark and to Elsmere. The area for the new study will be smaller. The original study had a total of sixty-one recommendations including transit service expansions, transit infrastructure, many intersections, travel demand management strategies, and roadway connections such as Churchman's Crossing and the ramp from Churchman's Road to I-95. Once the plan was done, a monitoring program was created to analyze each of the projects. From 1997 to 2004 an annual report was created that reviewed the land use, projects being constructed, projects that were planned or committed; measures on how transit service was running; traffic volumes, intersection level of service (LOS); and updates on all of the projects. After 2004 this monitoring ceased. In 2019 a monitoring update captured existing land use, infrastructure, and services, as well as the transit ridership, the intersection crash data, the bicycle and pedestrian work and the travel time data, using newer, more detailed data sources.

The land use update compared existing, committed, and exploratory non-residential development in the area over four different time periods. In 1997, there was approximately five million square feet of committed and exploratory non-residential development in the area, and it is at nearly the same level now. Some of this development has already been built and some is at varying levels of completeness, for example JP Morgan, the hospital, and the Christiana Fashion Center. Over five million square feet has been added and potentially another five million may be added in the future. Near I-95 another 3.7 million square feet is committed. Most of that is to the north of I-95 around DelTech and the northern portion of the study area with about 2.5

million square feet committed. To the south of I-95, you have space near the old Sears warehouse and some of the Fashion Center still in development. There is not much residential development, though Cavalier Country Club may be developed.

The original plan called for the addition of the Fairplay Station. Good data exists for the train station over the last eighteen years. There is an average of 150,000 riders each year with a peak year of 174,000 riders.

Five of the seven top bus routes cross within the area of study. Route 6, that covers the northern part of the area, is one of the top used routes in New Castle County. Ridership has declined 14% from FY 2017 to FY 2019. Determining trends for transit is difficult, because routes change twice a year with the service change, which makes them difficult to track over time. In 2003 there were 19 routes, but there was some route consolidation so by 2019 there were 16 routes. The area has seen a decline in total number of bus stops from one hundred and fifty-one stops in 2004 to one hundred and thirty-four in 2017. Many of the stops are in the top 20% of ridership in the state. WILMAPCO has been tracking the data on park and rides since 2006 through UPWP funds to see how efficient they are. The original plan recommended the addition of park and rides throughout the area. Christiana Mall's location is trending downward, perhaps due to the change of location. Fairplay Station park and ride usage mirrors the rail usage. Routes 7 and 273 usage has remained stable.

We did not have a non-motorized inventory for the corridor in 1997 or 2004. We now have a way to track the changes in the non-motorized inventory, which will help in the upcoming study to help with the use of the level of traffic stress, which is a tool we did not have back then.

For the traffic analysis two methods of study were used in previous monitoring efforts. Critical lane volume calculates the number of vehicles passing through and Highway Capacity Software, which calculates delay. Most intersections are not counted every year. There are seventy-eight signalized intersections within this boundary, and at the beginning of this study fourteen of them, or almost 20%, are failing at LOS of E or F at existing conditions. Nine or ten of the intersections have been counted often, creating a good record of the PM rush for the area over the years. The historical data shows the trends throughout this corridor. For the upcoming study, travel time technology will be useful as amount of data and frequency with which it is available helps with examining existing conditions for time of day. Data is mostly measured in peak hour, but some spots throughout the area could have hours of delay. This will be good for model inputs.

The safety analysis shows the number of crashes in the area has been on a steady climb since 2008. Crashes on I-95 are factored out as they may or may not be impacted by Churchman's Crossing. Intersection crash ranking was started a couple of years ago and DelDOT began using it. They are looking at intersections throughout the state for frequency, severity, and types of crash. The Churchman's Crossing area has fourteen of the top sixty and four of the top ten intersections for crash rankings throughout the state.

The team went through and looked at the sixty-one capital projects to report on progress in implementation from the 1997 plan. Twenty-five have been implemented including intersection and interchange improvements, Fairplay Station, bus improvements, and park and rides. Many have not been completed such as roadway improvements, MARC commuter rail service, additional park and rides and intersection improvements. The report has a list of everything that was included in the plan, whether it has been implemented and, if so, when. Some transit projects were started and stopped. This list provides a place to begin with what was planned and what is still viable.

In summary, much has been built in the area. There were multi-modal and park and ride improvements. Some of the transit service, because of the changes and maybe park and ride location changes, maybe could be improved. Traffic is already near capacity at some locations. Data about crashes within this corridor show the trends are continuing upward.

Mr. Dahlstrom asked if the crashes are happening during the peak hour or other times. Mr. Blevins replied he is not sure but would say the frequency of crashes would be greater during the day, but severity of injuries and fatalities would be at night with conditions and sobriety as a factor. As the updated study begins, that information can be pulled from the data because the hour of the crash will be available, so it is something that can be included.

Mr. Dahlstrom noted that the number bus routes declined but asked if the frequency of service has changed. Mr. Blevins deferred to Ms. Cathy Smith, who responded routes improved on-time performance for fixed routes. Bus stops are fixed for ADA compliance and available right of way.

Mr. Dahlstrom asked if the bus stops are at the busiest locations. Mr. Blevins replied he would assume so. The map shows where the bus stops are and the stops with the highest ridership are indicated. DART would put stops where they are needed, barring any physical restraints. Some stops may have been built by developers as their developer contribution in the old plan, so they may be in a good spot, but not the best spot.

Mr. Derrick Sexton asked if we have any commuter data for uses of the park and ride. Mr. Blevins replied that we have some. When the University of Delaware IPA does park and ride counts four times a year, WILMAPCO asks them to also do a license plate survey. Some may not be as significant as they are here at the Newark train station or near the border to Maryland and Pennsylvania, but we do have that data. Mr. Sexton asked if we have commuter bus service information for the park and ride. Mr. Blevins responded that we do not get into the origins of those who use park and ride as far as what their destinations are.

INFORMATION ITEMS

10. Staff Report

Ms. Dunigan reported the following updates:

- WILMAPCO Council met on May 7th and voted to approve the 2020 Unified Planning Work Program and voted to endorse the New Castle County Bicycle Plan.
- On April 28th staff participated in a kick-off meeting with DelDOT and members of the Marshallton community to work toward implementation of the Marshallton Circulation Study.
- Staff discussed some of the impacts of the pandemic on planning with the Mid-Atlantic Regional Public Health Partnership on May 4th.
- The Route 9 Monitoring Committee will meet on June 16th.
- A \$90,000 grant was awarded from the Healthy Communities Delaware Program for the Route 9 corridor and Southbridge to support planning and implementation efforts of the Route 9 Corridor Master Plan and the South Wilmington Planning Network.
- Staff is working with King Creative to produce public outreach videos about WILMAPCO and our planning including Route 9.
- The call for projects for the Maryland Transportation Alternatives Program will be open until May 29th. A call for projects in Delaware will be in the fall.

- Staff has reviewed draft scenarios and goals with the management committee of the Governor Printz study. A joint management advisory committee meeting will be June 1st.
- Staff will present the New Castle County Bicycle Plan at the Delaware Bike Council on June 3rd.
- On May 6th, there was call with partner agencies on the Churchman's Crossing Plan Update to review and discuss the scope of work. A final draft of the addendum of the scope of work has been circulated for review.
- The Wilmington Transit Hub was completed on May 19th and DTC coordinated its May 2020 service changes with the transit hub opening.
- Three alternatives for the Maryland, Monroe, MLK Safety Project were presented to DTC at a work session on April 15th. There will be another work session held mid-May to present the options to stakeholders.
- A survey for the Concord Pike Master Plan will be open on the WILMAPCO website until May 29th.
- Staff has been working on preliminary recommendations for the Newport Transportation Study based on comments from the advisory committee, stakeholders, and public workshop. A package of suggested changes for transit is being prepared to share with DTC in May or early June.
- There were some developments on the potential extension of MARC and SEPTA. Legislation was passed in Maryland by the General Assembly called House Bill 1239, which called for an expansion of MARC service. This was passed by the General Assembly but was vetoed by Governor Hogan due to funding shortfalls at the moment. Delaware General Assembly is also working on a similar legislation, House Concurrent Resolution 81, which would direct DeIDOT to coordinate with Maryland, Pennsylvania, MARC, SEPTA and Amtrak to enhance service between the states.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Stephen Miller of MDOT SHA said today he is transitioning off as the Regional Planner for the Eastern Shore, which includes Cecil County and WILMAPCO. The future Regional Planner for the Eastern Shore will be Mr. Derrick Sexton.

Ms. Dunigan thanked everyone for joining the meeting virtually. We will be continuing in this format for at least another month. Please reach out if you have any suggestions for the format of the meetings. Unfortunately, we do not think things will be back to normal to have our picnic in July. Perhaps we will have it in the fall.

ADJOURNMENT:

The TAC adjourned at 11:02AM

Attachments (0)