

# TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

June 18, 2020

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, June 18, 2020, via video conference/conference call.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Heather Dunigan, WILMAPCO, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

**2. TAC Members present:**

Ian Beam, Maryland Department of Transportation  
Alexandra Brun, Maryland Department of the Environment  
Cooper Bowers, Delaware Department of Transportation  
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning  
Stacey Dahlstrom, New Castle County Department of Land Use  
Michael Fortner, City of Newark  
Gwineth Kaminsky, City of Wilmington Planning  
Jeanne Minner, Town of Elkton  
Steve O'Connor, Cecil County Land Use  
Jolyon Shelton, DNREC  
Catherine Smith, DTC

**TAC Ex-Officio Members present:**

Lindsay Donnellon, U.S. Federal Highway Administration

**TAC Members absent:**

City of Wilmington Department of Public Works  
Delaware Division of Small Business, Development, and Tourism  
DNREC  
Delaware Office of State Planning  
Delaware River and Bay Authority  
Maryland Department of the Environment  
Maryland State Highway Administration  
Maryland Transit Administration

**TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:**

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

**Guests and Invitees:**

Tyson Byrne, Maryland Department of Transportation  
Josh Thomas, DelDOT

**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**

Mr. David Dahlstrom requested a change to the minutes on page seven, in the fourth paragraph, in the first sentence, “bus stop”, should be “bus shelter”. The May 21, 2020 minutes were approved with noted correction.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Cooper Bowers and seconded by Mr. Stephen O’Connor the TAC approved the May 21, 2020 TAC minutes as corrected.

Motion passed.

**(06-18-20 - 01)**

**4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

**a. Air Quality Subcommittee**

Mr. Bill Swiatek said the AQS met on June 4<sup>th</sup>. The group continued discussion of the FY 2020 TIP Amendment for the Replacement of Belvidere Road Bridge over CSX Railroad. It found that the project did not trigger a revised air quality conformity analysis at this time. It will likely be added, along with potential widenings of the Belvidere Road, to the next conformity run which is set for the next RTP update. The group also found a pair of other amendments to the FY 2020 TIP also did not trigger a revised conformity analysis. These were: “Small Urban Transit System - Capital and Operating Assistance” in Cecil County and “HSIP NCC, SR 273 and I-95 Intersection Improvements” in New Castle County. Finally, the AQS had a presentation on the MOVES-Matrix model from Rybinski Engineering, and its ability to provide more accurate emissions analyses for signal timing improvement projects.

**b. Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group**

Ms. Heather Dunigan said the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group met on June 2. Mr. Paul Moser presented an update of the Level of Traffic Stress Analysis that DelDOT performed statewide. One of the improvements in his analysis is using data based on real-time speed rather than posted speed limits, which gives a more real-world analysis of bicycle comfort. A presentation was made on the walking and bicycling analysis and recommendations of the Concord Pike Master Plan. Also, there was a presentation on COVID-19 and its impact on biking and walking in the region.

**5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

None.

## **6. Report from the Nominating Committee for TAC Chair**

Mr. Ian Beam said the committee met and, after discussion, recommends Mr. Michael Fortner as chair and Mr. Steve O'Connor as vice chair.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Ian Beam and seconded by Ms. Gwinneth Kaminsky the TAC approved Mr. Michael Fortner to serve as chair and Mr. Stephen O'Connor to serve as vice chair.

Motion passed.

**(06-18-20 - 02)**

On behalf of the staff, Ms. Dunigan thanked Mr. Dahlstrom for his service and thanked Mr. Fortner and Mr. O'Connor for agreeing to serve.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **7. To Recommend Amendment of the FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program**

Ms. Dunigan said Cecil County has requested that the TIP be amended to include funding for the Replacement of Belvidere Road Bridge CE0055 over CSX Railroad. This project ties into the I-95/Belvidere Road project and will expand the width of the bridge so when the I-95 interchange is complete, additional lanes can potentially be added to the bridge in the future. After conversations with the Air Quality Subcommittee and our federal partners, the conclusion was that the bridge itself would not trigger a conformity analysis. A slight modification to the scope of the project is expected but was not ready for this amendment. The county is hoping to move forward with PE next fiscal year. This project is important in order to connect some industrial areas to the interchanges.

Mr. O'Connor thanks MDOT and WILMAPCO for their guidance and offered to answer any questions.

Mr. Dahlstrom asked what the source of local match funding is. Mr. O'Connor replied the match is funded through the County Capital Improvement Program.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. David Dahlstrom and seconded by Ms. Jeanne Minner the TAC recommended amending the FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program to include funding for the replacement of the Belvidere Road Bridge CE0055 over CSX Railroad.

Motion passed.

**(06-18-20 - 03)**

### **8. To Recommend Amendment of the FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program**

Ms. Dunigan said MDOT and the Maryland Transit Administration has requested that the TIP be amended to increase the funding for the Small Urban Transit System operated by Cecil County. This is an increase in funding for a few categories including operating and capital systems.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Ian Beam and seconded by Mr. David Dahlstrom the TAC recommended amending the FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program to include revised funding for Small Urban Transit System.

Motion passed.

(06-18-20 - 04)

**9. To Recommend Amendment of the FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program**

Ms. Dunigan said DelDOT has requested that the TIP be amended to increase project funds for the HSIP project at the SR 273 and I-95 interchange.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Steve O'Connor and seconded by Ms. Jeanne Minner the TAC recommended amending the FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program to include revised funding for HSIP, SR 273 and I-95 Intersection Improvements.

Motion passed.

(06-18-20 - 05)

**10. To Recommend Amendment of the WILMAPCO Project Prioritization Process**

Ms. Dunigan said staff recommends modifications to the WILMAPCO Project Prioritization Process to conform with the most recent RTP and recent documents including the Environmental Justice and Transportation Justice Report.

Mr. Dahlstrom recommended that on the first page, in step one, where the text, "transportation investment areas" was added, links to a map and the document be added. Ms. Dunigan replied that a link can be added.

**ACTION:** On motion by Ms. Gwinneth Kaminsky and seconded by Ms. Cathy Smith the TAC recommended the amendment of the WILMAPCO Prioritization Process.

Motion passed.

(06-18-20 - 06)

**11. To Recommend Releasing the Draft WILMAPCO Public Participation Plan for Public Comment**

Ms. Randi Novakoff said that staff proposes the release of a draft of the Public Participation Plan (PPP) for public comment. The document has not changed dramatically since the TAC last reviewed it. The beginning of the document describes who WILMAPCO is, provides a description of the committees and details on the PAC. It also includes a section describing the importance of public input and the process of how the PPP was developed. Details were added about the public participation survey that was conducted as part of the plan development process. The survey was available in both English and Spanish and had 171 participants. In the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) section, details were added to reflect new outreach strategies that were used for the 2050 RTP. Additional details on the public process for the TIP were also added, including a graphic from the Transportation Planning Guide on how an idea becomes a project.

The Transportation Equity section was updated to reflect the many outreach recommendations of the Transportation Justice (TJ) Report. The PPP identifies three broad recommendations for outreach, including: working toward more inclusive involvement, working to diversify outreach techniques, and investing in building relationships with the communities we are trying to reach out to, taken from the TJ Report.

Of the four goals of the PPP, the first three have not changed. The fourth goal was added to incorporate the recommendations from the TJ Report. The fourth goal is to achieve cultural

proficiency and work to empower local communities to ensure social equity and representative involvement in our planning processes and programs. This goal will be achieved by working to be proactive in cultural diversity. The strategies will include participating in staff training and working to build better relationships with the communities. Developing organizational practices that integrate cultural proficiency including using demographic quotas for the public opinion survey and allowing self-identification of gender on surveys. Recruiting minority representation on our Public Advisory Committee is something we have been striving for.

A social media policy has also added, which allows staff to delete posts that are violent, political, profane, or suggest illegal activity. A list outreach strategies has been added to the plan as well. The full results of the online survey will be included in the appendix. We are proposing the document be released for a public comment from July 10<sup>th</sup> - September 9<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Dahlstrom commented on page eight, the photo shows two individuals walking down the street without a sidewalk, and asked if there is a TIP project to fix that. Ms. Novakoff replied that photo is along Routes 9 near 295. Projects for that area have been identified in the Route 9 Master Plan. Mr. Dahlstrom commented that it might be good to put a caption to relate photos back to the outreach efforts, so people know what they are.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Steve O'Connor and seconded by Mr. David Dahlstrom the TAC recommended releasing the Draft WILMAPCO Public Participation Plan for public comment.

Motion passed.

**(06-18-20 - 07)**

## **PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

### **12. Nonmotorized Impacts of COVID-19**

Ms. Dunigan said biking and walking have been encouraged during the pandemic as a safe form of transportation out in the open air, and also as a form of recreation and physical activity. At WILMAPCO, walking and biking are typically discussed as a form of transportation, but in a time when the gyms and other forms of recreational activities are closed, it is a form of exercise and recreation as people are keeping physical distance from each other. The importance of walking and biking during a time of pandemic is not new. During the Spanish Flu in 1918, people were encouraged to ride their bicycles to boost their immune systems through physical activity. Today, people are still encouraged to stay active with the reminders to stay physically distant, wear masks, and follow safe practices.

Driving and transit declined substantially during the pandemic, but at the same time we have seen an increase in walking and biking. In food deserts, people generally still had access to supermarkets using a combination of walking and biking. Many people are using curbside pickup or delivery, for which they pay a premium. From a functionality standpoint, this is a luxury. Paying premium for delivery or the need for a vehicle for curbside pickup makes having access via walking and biking important. The CDC recommends caution in using transit as you are in an enclosed space with other people. Park and Ride usage has been down during the pandemic with the exception of the two park and rides that happen to be at parks.

From a transportation standpoint, nationally there have been many different strategies to deal with the pandemic. The National Association of City Transit Officials (NACTO) came up with a variety of strategies. Ms. Dunigan highlighted some of the strategies that focus on active

transportation with physical distancing. Some of the recommendations focus on maintaining a transportation system to safely move essential workers and goods including building pop-up bike lanes, bike shops staying open, converting signals to non-touch signals, adjusting vehicle traffic signals to slow traffic which has increased in speed as volume has reduced. As stores limit capacity, shoppers waiting on the sidewalks have caused a need to address delivery and pick up zones. Physical distancing is needed on the trails, pathways, and sidewalks as they have higher volumes of people. It is important to deliver clear messaging to the communities on what to expect and how to behave.

Bike shops have been declared essential businesses in Delaware and Maryland with some restrictions which are now easing in both states. There has been a surge of bike sales nationally and locally. Inexpensive to mid-range bicycles cannot be found for purchase. Urban Bike Project delivered two hundred and nine bikes in May. Newark Bike Project has seen a 70% increase in bikes delivered to the community in the months March through May over last year.

Touch push buttons for pedestrians have been replaced with automatic push buttons in some areas, but signage indicating the signal is automated is still needed. Ms. Dunigan showed examples from other jurisdictions. There has been a lot of outreach on the proper way to use facilities such as reminders to wear masks on the trails. Another example is that the Newark Reservoir Trail is now one way-to reduce contact with people. Some parks and trails were closed to outside users during the height of the pandemic such as Battery Park in New Castle and the trails on the VA property in Perryville. Other areas explored adding new bike lanes or closing roads to through traffic to create space for people to walk and bike close to their neighborhoods. Community groups have asked WILMAPCO for technical assistance for some ideas in the City of Wilmington, but plans were put on hold due to lack of resources and traffic concerns. Some strategies that are moving forward are outdoor dining proposals. Newark will be adding some closures on Main Street during the weekends to allow outdoor seating. The City of Wilmington already implemented some of these closures such as closing a block on Market Street on weekends.

Trail use has increased during the pandemic. A nationwide survey found that among the Americans that own a bike, 21% have been riding more since the COVID -19 pandemic. Data from state parks show most counters have increased substantially during the pandemic versus last spring. A few parks in Newark have shown a decline, but Ms. Dunigan suspects that these declines are because these locations frequently host group races and these group events are not being held during the pandemic. On the Jack Markell Trail, there is a substantial increase in use this year over last. At the Markell Bridge, one day alone had more than two thousand users, which is a typical monthly use in one day.

We are not sure what is next, but physical distancing will likely continue at least until there is a vaccine. Vehicle volumes are starting to increase as the economy begins to reopen, but that means the air quality may decline and the streets may become less comfortable for biking. Some communities have expressed continued desire for slow streets for walking and biking, so WILMAPCO is available to help communities plan for that. We do not know if walking and biking will continue to be preferred modes of travel. Perhaps many people have discovered that they enjoy it. As people continue telecommuting, they have more time to spend recreationally, which may include biking and walking. Also, concerns about using public transit remain.

Mr. Fortner commented that in Newark, the pedestrian mall was limited to just a Thursday later this month. It is not going to be a weekend event, at least for now. Restaurants value the curbside pickup and they do not want to disrupt that.

Mr. Dahlstrom asked about the process to get posted speed limits on state roads down to twenty miles per hour to accommodate the slow roads for activities. Ms. Dunigan replied that discussions with the City of Wilmington included DeIDOT and looked at closures that would limit some streets to local traffic only, but did not really discuss reducing speed limits per se. DeIDOT was on board to install barriers to make temporary bike lanes that would in effect slow the speeds of traffic. The streets being considered had slow speed limits, around twenty-five miles per hour, and giving physical cues to remind people to be watchful of pedestrians and bicyclists will probably make reduction in speed limit unnecessary. Any road that involves the state DOTs require permission and permitting to make this type of change. Mr. Dahlstrom said he thinks twenty-five is probably too fast for any multi-purpose street with dining, walking, and biking. Ms. Dunigan agreed and said we could keep an eye on local examples. She is not aware of any shared streets moving forward. The examples that have been discussed are expanding outdoor dining seating by keeping the current lanes and closing the streets at certain times of day, not having shared space.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **10. Staff Report**

Ms. Dunigan reported the following updates:

- The Air Quality Partnership is working to reschedule April's Air Quality Awareness Week, along with Bike to Work Week, for September 7<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup>.
- WILMAPCO is working on scheduling interviews and collecting video footage for outreach videos that will highlight some of our activities.
- Safe Routes to School will be meeting with Bayard Elementary School to plan a path forward and collect parental feedback.
- Staff is working with the UD Institute for Public Administration on Freight Friday Webinars, which will be every Friday in June via Zoom meeting. All of the webinars are available on the Institute for Public Administration's Facebook page.
- On June 1<sup>st</sup>, the Governor Printz Boulevard Advisory Committee met. Some of the strategies and recommendations will be adjusted before presentation to the public in the fall.
- Staff is supporting the planning of the APA Delaware's Annual Meeting in early October. It will be held virtually and will feature lessons learned during the pandemic.
- On May 30<sup>th</sup> staff hosted a conference call with partner agencies for the Churchman's Crossing Plan, RK&K, and staff from Urban3 who will be preparing a market study for the area and also assisting with developing land use scenarios.
- On June 16<sup>th</sup>, staff had a work session call with Delaware Transit Corporation to determine the final recommendation on the options for the Maryland, Monroe and MLK Safety Project. DTC will supply final comments later this month on which options will be presented to the stakeholders.
- All the public comments have been received from the online survey for the Concord Pike Master Plan. There were nearly two hundred participants in the comment period. This feedback is being incorporated into the final report.
- The draft document for the Southern New Castle County Master Plan is under review by the partner agencies. A final workshop will be held, perhaps in August, with results of the traffic analysis and project recommendations.
- For the Newport Transportation Study, staff is working on preliminary recommendations for pedestrian and transit improvements based on the advisory committee, stakeholders, and

workshop feedback. These recommendations are being packaged to share with the management committee on June 25<sup>th</sup>

- Several RFPs were sent, or soon will be sent. The deadlines for these will be in July. The projects are the Union Street Project, City of New Castle Transportation Plan, Truck Parking Study, Port of Wilmington Study, and First/Last Mile Freight Analysis. All of these RFPs can be found on our website.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The TAC adjourned at 10:53 AM

**Attachments (0)**