

**JOINT TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND
AIR QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
September 15, 2022**

A joint meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Air Quality Subcommittee (AQS) was held on Thursday, September 15, 2022, at Lums Pond State Park.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Matt Rogers, TAC Chair, brought the joint TAC and AQS meeting to order at 10:23 a.m.

2. TAC Members present:

Tricia Arndt, Delaware Office of State Planning
Cooper Bowers, Delaware Department of Transportation
Michael Fortner, City of Newark
Rashad Pinckney, Maryland Department of Transportation
Matthew Littejohn, Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning
Matthew Rogers, New Castle County Department of Land Use

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 Transit Corporation
Delaware River and Bay Authority
DNREC
Maryland Department of the Environment
Maryland Department of Planning
Maryland State Highway Administration
Maryland Transit Administration
Town of Elkton

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

Air Quality Subcommittee Members present:

Cooper Bowers, Delaware Department of Transportation
Rachel McGuire, Jacobs
Rashad Pinckney, MDOT
Matthew Rogers, New Castle County Department of Land Use

Guests and Invitees:

Tyson Byrne, Maryland Department of Transportation
Elizabeth Coffey, Jacobs

Kevin Racine, Citizen
Emmett Toombs, Citizen

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

Action postponed due to lack of quorum.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

None.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

ACTION ITEMS

None.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

6. Air Quality Partnership Update

Ms. Randi Novakoff said the Air Quality Partnership has spent more than twenty years in Delaware educating people about simple measures that can be taken to improve air quality such as walking and biking. This year's main initiatives have been helping coordinate the City of Wilmington Earth Day event and Open Streets event. For the Open Streets event five blocks of Market Street were closed down for vendors, environmental exhibits, and food trucks. More than five hundred people attended. The mascot, Tropo, was there. Exhibitor bingo encouraged people to visit exhibitor tables for a chance to win a Tropo prize. The City of Wilmington does not want to host an Earth Day event next year. The Air Quality Partnership is considering continuing the event.

The Air Quality Partnership have a few social media campaigns. They host Air Quality Awareness Week twice a year. In April, they shared different modes of transportation for each day of the week to encourage using different modes. The September campaign is next week and will have a Share for the Air Clean Air Challenge where people are encouraged to post on Instagram using a filter that shows a randomizer with clean air tips and transforms their face into Tropo. There is also Tropo assembly that we have been working to digitize. We have not been able to go into schools for the past few years, so we hope the digital version will make it easier to share the assembly. Next year, Air Quality Partnership will be celebrating over twenty years of raising awareness, so that will be an opportunity to celebrate their successes and raise awareness of that partnership.

Ms. Tricia Arndt asked why Wilmington does not want to host an Earth Day event. Ms. Novakoff said she did not hear a specific reason, though cost is factor, and it is a lot of work. Mr. Matt Rogers asked if they reached out to the county to see if there is interest in working on it. Ms. Novakoff said we can do that. Ms. Heather Dunigan said she thinks Open Streets will want to partner with Air Quality Partnership again. The events went really well, and it may take some of the planning burdens off both groups.

7. RTP 2050: 2023 Update

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said our RTP update started with the Regional Progress Report in March. A Public Opinion Survey was completed and presented to the TAC and Council. A draft project list was created in coordination with MDOT and DeIDOT. Technical assessments are now being conducted. We have financial reasonableness from New Castle County. We recognize that Mr. Byrne and Mr. Pinckney are working diligently to get the Cecil County portion. The air quality conformity analysis has begun. The outreach with both civic and public agencies in both counties has already begun. Twelve meetings are already scheduled. Once the draft RTP is done, we plan to meet with the members agencies and their staff. Officially, the long-range plan will be released for public comment including the air quality conformity at the January Council meeting, which means it will be brought to the TAC at the December meeting. The Our Town RTP Public Workshop will be held on February 8th. More information will be provided about that as it gets closer. We hope the PAC and TAC will recommend adoption in February and the WILMAPCO Council will adopt it in March.

8. I-95 Cap Feasibility Study

Mr. Dave Gula said this project's name was changed to Bridging I-95: Connecting the Community. WILMAPCO is working with DeIDOT and the City of Wilmington. The consultant is Hargreaves Jones and JMT for engineering. This is exploring the feasibility of building a cap over sections of I-95 in Wilmington where it is below grade covering some or all of the area from 6th Street to Delaware Avenue. Neighborhood groups are the majority of the advisory committee, which is used to steer the project and will help select the preferred concept. This study will be handed off to DeIDOT when completed. The team allowed the community to say what they want to see in the space. The team is open to the residents' ideas with caveat that the federal government controls air space over a federal highway. There will be no changes to I-95 nor the ramps. Other cities have built similar caps over highways. The team can look at what was done in cities like Minneapolis and at Philadelphia's Penns Landing and build off their experience. This project area is about twelve acres.

There have been three public workshops and three advisory committee meetings. At these workshops, attendees are given background information and asked what they want to see in this space. During Zoom meetings, breakout rooms were used to facilitate discussion. During in-person workshops attendees broke into smaller groups around tables for conversation and to give feedback. Attendees do not want sports courts. There are basketball courts and a baseball diamond near this location. Also, public space designed for sports sometimes can only be used for that sport. People want the common space to be as flexible as possible. There was a push for affordable housing, early in the outreach, but we have not heard much more about that in recent workshops. The City of Wilmington suggested a dog park. One citizen wants a large entertainment venue similar to the Big Kahuna (outdoor concert venue formerly on the Christina Riverwalk), but they closed their outdoor space when residential neighborhoods moved in, and this area is already surrounded by neighborhoods. A small amphitheater for plays or small local concerts may be possible. People want open spaces, art spaces, and water play as trees will not mature to provide shade for years.

At the April workshop, people liked the Greenway approach that removed bridges. A traffic analysis had to be done to make sure the project did not cause backups on local streets that could also affect the I-95 ramps. The feasibility study team is considering closing the 7th and 9th Street bridges to vehicles. It was said at workshops that the space over I-95 between 6th and 8th Streets should be included as they have least amenities right now. If a phased approach is used, that section should be done first. People are okay with closing bridges to cars. People also talked about Jackson and Adams Streets needing to be more safe and manageable to walk and bike across to access a park. As part of the traffic analysis, the team looked at not only closing bridges, but implementing a road diet on Jackson and Adams Streets. The bridges are wide, but there is not a lot of traffic volume. The traffic study found that two bridges can be closed without much impact on traffic. The exceptions are the bridge at Delaware Avenue and the bridge at 10th Street due to traffic flows, and because 10th Street is heavily used at Lewis Elementary School for bus and parent pick up. Closing 7th and 9th Street bridges creates two large spans for park spaces. Emergency medical services were consulted and are okay with these closures. Closing 9th Street would impact transit, but they can use Jackson, Adams and the 6th Street bridge to work around that closure. Only a few hundred cars a day were measured. A road diet on Jackson Street is being considered. Near the northern I-95 on ramp the street gets busy, but the rest of the street is not busy, and the wide lanes encourage cars to speed. To calm traffic, signal timing can be adjusted and the street can be reduced to one travel lane to provide parking and/or a two-way bicycle path. There will be no parking planned for the structure over I-95. At the advisory committee meeting, the Secretary of Transportation said Adams Street could be considered to be reduced from three lanes to two. Adams Street also needs better intersection treatments to improve pedestrian safety. The team went to the Waterfront where crossings are raised and paved in a different color to really stand out. There will be more detail of the analysis at next workshop.

Concept A has amphitheater space, removes vehicular bridges, and adds a multipurpose lawn. North of 8th Street is a playground and a fountain. North of 10th Street are community and pollinator gardens. North of that is a structure, which could be a covered eating area where food trucks can park or rest rooms. Concept B is similar but moves the playground closer to 6th Street. There is no amphitheater but there are a multipurpose area and a lawn that could be used for performances. The neighborhood associations have shown movies outside by closing a bridge to vehicles, which is the kind of thing that can be done on the lawn. There is a cutout north of the 11th Street off ramp where the area is not capped. The Secretary of Transportation asked why the whole thing would not be capped, which indicates support and willingness to spend the money needed to complete this project. Concept B-1 moves the fountain away from 9th Street to Jackson Street. There will be traffic near 9th Street due to the I-95 off ramp so maybe it should not have a focal point that attracts people. However, the fountain could cover sound of the traffic. The Delaware Avenue space could be a place for a café or outdoor eating area and restrooms

At the September 6th workshop, this information was shared, and more feedback was received. In this workshop, two out of the thirty attendees were against closing any vehicle access anywhere. People moving in want the area to be more multimodal. Some long-time residents want to use their cars, but cars can easily get around the area, now. Residents say they are not comfortable crossing Adams Street as pedestrians. The goal is to make it safer. A road diet is important, because this cap is a waste of money if people cannot access it. A road diet does not have to wait. A bridge can close for a month to see the effect on traffic. Wilmington and DelDOT have been doing pop up lane closures in different areas to see how traffic is affected so that can be done here. Lighting on the bridges is poor. More lights can be installed now. Signals were on a 24-hour schedule, but as DelDOT worked on improvements in this corridor as part of the I-95

Restore the Corridor project, around two hundred signals have been changed so DeIDOT can monitor and change them remotely. Controlling the signals can work to control speeds. The team was asked if some improvements can spread into the neighborhoods. It is not in the original scope, but some streetscape improvements can spread into neighborhood. A major concern is who will maintain this space. Someone is needed to manage it. Having the state involved may mean the state will take a part in managing it. Residents say building a park that is not well lit, invites crime. A group similar to the Downtown Visions Clean and Safe team found around Market Street and the Riverfront would be needed to act as ambassadors and to be in communication with police. Some of the folks who will be needed in maintaining it are on the advisory committee.

The next steps are updating the report with the traffic study, information from the last workshop, and putting in the concepts. Then our engineering consultant will look at price and phasing the project. Some open areas might be needed to vent exhaust. A cap from 6th to 8th Streets might be a tunnel, which would be the first tunnel in Delaware. Federal standards set a maximum distance before a vent is needed and no one wants a big chimney in the neighborhood venting exhaust. The team is planning another advisory committee meeting and public workshop before Thanksgiving. Then the report will be brought to TAC, then to Council in January.

Mr. Matt Rogers asked about realigning Cool Springs Park or integrating it into the open space with existing sidewalks. Mr. Gula said that is sort of a playground for the school. The city and DeIDOT do not like mid-block crossings and the school lets out on 10th Street, so the intersection of 10th and Jackson Streets is important. It could be an area that the school could use during the day. The community group, United Neighbors painted the bridges. They have painted them over the course of three years. This summer they did the 9th and 10th Street bridges. An artist was commissioned to do 9th Street, but for 10th Street, the neighbors primed it and students come out to paint it with an artist. The design is school mascot oriented. We want the kids involved.

Mr. Tyson Byrne asked about integrating this art into the park system. Mr. Gula said he thinks it will be preserved. We have years remaining for these bridges, maybe up to ten years, so the art can still be enjoyed for some time. Mr. Gula is thinking that the art could be retained in retaining walls. If the bridge continues to serve as a roadway, it may not need to be removed. We want to preserve the art.

INFORMATION ITEMS

9. Staff Report

Ms. Dunigan reported the following updates:

- Council met on September 8th and had many action items. The Council voted to amend the 2023 UPWP with more funding. The Council voted to amend the TIP for Belvidere Road as that project is moving forward with design and engineering. Council approved the categories of federal funding for 2023, endorsed the City of New Castle Transportation Plan, and endorsed the 2023 CMAQ Performance Plan.
- Staff is working on the RTP Update. Staff is going out to present the RTP update. Staff was at EDTAC on August 8th, Elsmere and Centerville on September 8th, Middletown on September 12th, Newport and Ardencroft on September 15th, the Wilmington City Council Transportation Committee and at Delaware City on September 19th, the Greater Hockessin Area Development Association on October 17th, and North East on October 26th. Staff will present the RTP at the City of New Castle at the meeting where the City of New Castle Transportation Plan is presented.

- Staff are supporting DART's Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant awarded to the Route 9 Corridor. A path forward meeting was held August 16th.
- Staff continue to support Collaborate North East's Emerging Mobility work. A steering committee meeting was held September 13th.
- Staff are supporting Delaware's EV Infrastructure Plan development and attended a steering committee meeting on September 14.
- Staff will participate in an APA Delaware Networking Event for students and emerging planners on September 28th in Newark, as well as the APA Delaware State Conference on October 5th and 6th. For more information and to register, please visit the APA Delaware website.
- The Southbridge Traffic Circulation Study: 2023 Update has been renamed the Southbridge Transportation Action Plan. The first public workshop will be held in conjunction with the Southbridge Civic Association's meeting on October 18th.
- The Ardens Transportation Plan has been renamed: Connecting with the Ardens: A Transportation Plan. The first public workshop will be held on October 25th.
- Governor Printz and the North Claymont Area Master Plan monitoring committee had a kickoff meeting August 29th. A stakeholder meeting will be held in October.
- There is a callout to New Castle County for submissions for TAP and bike ped pool funding. Submissions are due on September 23rd.
- Staff participated in the MDOT CTP pretour on September 9th. The tour is September 16th.
- Staff attended a TAP overview meeting on September 1st.
- Staff participated in the Delaware Freight Plan public meeting in New Castle County on September 12th.
- WILMAPCO will have an exhibit at Newark Community Day on September 18th.
- Staff will participate in the Maryland MPO Roundtable on September 23rd.
- Southbridge's Wetlands Park grand opening is September 27th.
- Charlestown Walkable Community Workshop is scheduled for October 14th.
- The Southbridge Circulation workshop will be held during the Southbridge Civic Association meeting on October 18th.
- I-95 Cap outreach efforts included an advisory committee meeting and community meeting at Lewis Elementary School on September 6th, staff attending the William Hicks Anderson Open House on August 20th, and staff attending the United Neighbors bridge painting event on August 27th.
- The Air Quality Partnership is planning Air Quality Awareness Week for week of Sept 19th. They created a "Share for Clean Air" social media challenge to encourage sharing of air quality tips throughout the week. This will include the Tropo introduction video and a Snapchat filter.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The TAC adjourned at 11:13 AM

Attachments (0)