

**TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**September 21, 2023**

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, September 21, 2023, at Lums Pond State Park, 1068 Howell School Road, Bear, DE 19701 in- person only.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Matt Rogers, New Castle County Department of Land Use, and TAC Chair, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:17 a.m.

**2. TAC Members present:**

Tricia Arndt, Delaware Office of State Planning  
Cooper Bowers, Delaware Department of Transportation  
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning  
Matthew Littlejohn, Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning  
Matt Rogers, New Castle County Department of Land Use  
Derrick Sexton, Maryland SHA Regional and Intermodal Planning Division  
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

**TAC Ex-Officio Members present:**

None

**TAC Members absent:**

City of Wilmington Planning  
City of Wilmington Department of Public Works  
Delaware Division of Small Business, Development, and Tourism  
Delaware River and Bay Authority  
DNREC  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
Maryland Department of the Environment

**TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:**

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

**Guests and Invitees:**

Kevin Rancine, Hartford County  
William Sedberry, Hartford County  
Bill Williamson, Delaware Transit Corporation

**Staff:**

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner  
Sharen Elcock, Executive Assistant  
Elizabeth Espinal, Administrative Assistant  
Dave Gula, Principal Planner  
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner  
Dawn Voss, Outreach Coordinator  
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Espinal.

### **3. MINUTES**

Approval of the July 20, 2023, TAC Minutes and August 17, 2023, TAC minutes was postponed until next meeting due to lack of a quorum.

### **4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

#### **a. Air Quality Subcommittee**

Mr. Bill Swiatek said the Air Quality Subcommittee met on September 7. The group reviewed the proposed CMAQ spending in Delaware. They found that all elements were eligible but questioned the proposed "Telecommunications Hub Upgrades" within the ITMS program. This was a \$100,000 project to upgrade DelDOT's six large hub shelters to include uninterrupted power supplies, electrical monitoring equipment and backup generators, including one portable generator. As the air quality benefits of this project seemed negligible, and after consulting with FHWA's CMAQ Guidance, the AQS recommended a different funding pool be utilized for this project and that the \$100,000 be spent on a CMAQ project with more direct air quality benefits. DelDOT agreed to make these changes after this meeting.

### **5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Mr. Kevin Rancine pointed out that Hartford County marks the end of the line of the existing bus routes, while Cecil County serves as the starting point for the service, facilitating connections to Delaware state lines. He proposed the initiation of a plan aimed at integrating train tracks connecting SEPTA and MARC transit across state lines. This initiative aims to build up ridership in both Cecil and Hartford counties within Maryland.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

**NONE.**

### **6. PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

#### **DART Reimagined Update**

Ms. Cathy Smith provided an update on the DART Reimagined project. She began by outlining the company's mission, which is to connect you to what matters, through "every ride, every customer, every day". She emphasized the importance of diversity and inclusion within the workforce to better serve this mission. Additionally, Ms. Smith stressed DART's commitment to environmentally friendly public transit services.

The DART Reimagined project was launched in the spring, with a focus on gathering information and feedback from both internal sources and the public. Ms. Smith mentioned that during the COVID-19 era, ridership was affected, but it has now rebounded to 80%. Throughout the initiation of this project the public outreach efforts received positive feedback, including over 2,400 customer survey responses.

Ms. Smith explained that DART is now in the "Identify" phase of the project, aiming to allocate resources effectively and increase ridership. The company developed an "Initial Draft Network" during the summer, focusing on providing faster, more frequent, and reliable services that are accessible and safe.

The presentation highlighted the importance of improving service quality through the optimization of resources and the development of service standards all throughout the state of Delaware. Ms. Smith discussed various service delivery models, including microtransit, and their potential benefits per counties. New Castle County, DART recommended changes to several routes, such as retaining some routes, improving others, modifying, or merging some, converting some to microtransit zones, and discontinuing others. There are currently 32 existing routes. This is a summary of the recommendations:

- 6 routes are recommended to remain unchanged because they are effective and meet market needs.
- 8 routes should be improved, either by increasing frequencies or adjusting alignments.
- 7 routes need slight modifications or should be merged with other routes for better efficiency.
- 5 routes are recommended to be converted into microtransit zones to enhance local circulation.
- 6 routes are suggested to be discontinued due to low ridership or other factors.

These changes aim to establish core routes that connect neighborhoods, employment areas, activity centers, and transfer hubs in New Castle County. The presentation also included details on mobility benefits, including increased accessibility to transit and jobs.

The next steps involve finalizing the recommendations and developing implementation plans. Some changes may be proposed in the May 2024 Service Update, and all changes will undergo a public process before implementation. The full implementation of these recommendations is expected to take about five years.

Ms. Smith encouraged engagement, feedback, and participation in virtual meetings, providing contact information for further inquiries.

Mr. David Dahlstrom inquired about the DART Connect App, asking whether it was a proprietary creation of DART or if it was an off-the-shelf solution obtained from a third party. In response, Ms. Smith explained that DART had developed the app in collaboration with a product vendor called BitMart. She acknowledged the issue of multiple DART apps, including DART transit, DART Pass, and DART Connect, and expressed awareness of the need to integrate these systems into a single app. DART is currently working on upgrading its GFI fare boxes, and they plan to seek bids for this project, including the integration of the map, to streamline and consolidate the various apps into a more user-friendly solution.

Ms. Tricia Ardnt asked Ms. Cathy about the current bus fare per route and whether the microtransit fares would be the same. Ms. Cathy responded by stating that the current bus fare is \$2 per trip, with a daily pass priced at \$4.20. She mentioned that there used to be different fares for each county, but they have worked to make it equitable across all counties.

Additionally, Ms. Cathy explained that there is an 80-cent reduced fare for senior citizens who are eligible. She further elaborated on various fare options, including 7-day passes, 30-day passes, a 2023 trip ticket pass, and student fares. She also mentioned special promotions, such as tomorrow's celebration of "Car-Free Day," where buses will be free to encourage riders to park and ride or use public transit.

Mr. William Sedberry, raised a two-part question regarding aspects of microtransit: the presence of designated stops and the definition of the area referred to as Bear. In response, Ms. Cathy Smith clarified that microtransit does not operate with designated stops; instead, it operates on-demand, similar to Paratransit. Paratransit requires eligibility verification for riders, whereas microtransit is open to the public and relies on virtual bus stops that are determined based on geographical data obtained from your phone or the app. Passengers can book trips themselves

using the app, or if they lack a smartphone, they can call a reservationist to book a ride. The virtual bus stop could be at a specific location, such as a bus stop or the closest intersection. Although it is described as "curb to curb," it does not entail designated bus stops. Regarding the area known as Bear, Ms. Smith explained that the exact parameters of the microtransit zone in the Route 40 corridor from Bear to the Wilton Blvd. area are still undetermined. This aspect will require collaboration with the public and further refinement, as it is still in the early stages of development.

Ms. Tigist Zegeye asked whether the company intends to conduct a comprehensive benefit analysis to assess the results of its proposed changes. She was interested in DART's ability to demonstrate the benefits to the public. In response, Ms. Cathy Smith confirmed that DART is indeed conducting such an analysis. She mentioned that their current operating budget is approximately \$138.5 million, with a subsidized budget of around \$89 million annually. DART's goal is to allocate resources in a way that maximizes advantages for the largest number of people. They are in the process of establishing core standards and working closely with facilities to develop a fleet plan. Ms. Smith assured us that there will be a detailed cost breakdown, including both capital and operating estimates, along with an estimated ridership forecast, to provide a comprehensive overview of the planned changes.

Mr. Dave Gula raised a question and shared a comment with Ms. Cathy Smith regarding the consulting team's role in the DART Reimagined project's five-year plan implementation. Mr. Gula asked whether the consulting team was assisting in mapping out this implementation plan. In response, Ms. Smith expressed her appreciation for the question and explained that they were planning a strategy session with their lead consultant, HDR, and their sub-consultant, Nelson Nygaard, to comprehensively address the implementation plan. She acknowledged the importance of their involvement, especially in navigating the service change and annual buy-in processes. Ms. Smith mentioned that this phase would likely occur in late October or November, with the project expected to conclude by the end of the year or early January. Mr. Gula, who had previous experience working for DART and had studied transit systems extensively, commended the project's comprehensiveness in addressing issues and how they planned to tackle them. He stressed the importance of transparency in communicating the project timeline to the public, emphasizing that setting clear expectations was crucial to maintaining public trust in the process.

Ms. Smith agreed with Mr. Gula's point, highlighting the significance of maintaining the positive momentum generated by the project. She expressed her enthusiasm for the project's progress, noting the overwhelming interest from the public in getting involved and spreading the word.

## **7. WILMAPCO FY2024 Project Updates**

Ms. Tigist Zegeye discussed two ongoing projects. She began with an update on the Newark Bicycle Plan, emphasizing its in-house nature and the goal of updating the 2014 plan. Ms. Zegeye mentioned the incorporation of recommendations from Newark PIMD, national practices, and input from various stakeholders, including the City of Newark, DeIDOT, New Castle County, Bike PED Newark, and community groups. The project had recent meetings and presentations, including one at the Newark Community Festival Day.

Ms. Zegeye introduced the Rising Sun Mobility Friendly Development Guidelines project, initiated at the request of the town of Rising Sun. She mentioned the consultant, Hurley Franks Associates, from Philadelphia, assisting with the project. The objective is to create mobility-friendly design guidelines for current and future development in Rising Sun, potentially involving changes to existing zoning or subdivision ordinances. The project schedule includes a kickoff

meeting, interviews, drafting a memo summarizing interviews and outlining issues and goals, and eventually presenting recommendations to stakeholders.

Mr. Bill Swiatek continued the presentation of updates on the WILMAPCO's FY 2024 projects, specifically focusing on the East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan. This project originally comprised two separate UPWP requests: one involving safety improvements on Belle Hill Road and another along Muddy Lane and Delancy Road, addressing issues with site distances, new development, and road alignments. To enhance efficiency and avoid confusion, the decision was made to combine these two projects. Wallace Montgomery was selected to lead the efforts, and a kickoff meeting with the management committee was held on August 22. Additionally, a Task 1 report was completed in-house, examining issues, constraints, and background data. Mr. Swiatek highlighted the utilization of our StreetLight data to analyze updated volumes, speeds, and heavy truck traffic on these routes. Notable findings included insights into high-traffic stretches, crash rates at intersections, and the impact of I-95 toll avoidance at the Maryland-Delaware line.

Mr. Swiatek also mentioned an upcoming Steering Committee meeting on the 26th, which will include representatives from various state and local organizations, as well as a live public survey that can be found on WILMAPCO's website and Facebook pages. There is a Public Workshop scheduled for October 26 at Elkton's Public Library. The workshop aims to gather community input and is part of WILMAPCO's efforts to engage with the community effectively. Measures have been taken to ensure equity, including direct mailings to several subsidized apartment developments in the study area.

Mr. Dave Gula provided updates on two projects during the presentation. Firstly, he discussed the South Claymont-Philadelphia Pike Corridor Master Plan, which builds upon the success of the North Claymont project. The focus is on an area with significant changes and challenges, particularly in terms of traffic safety. The project aims to engage the community and find ways to improve transportation and development in the area. DelDOT and the county will work closely on this project. A consulting team, Kittleson & Associates, was selected to assist with planning and outreach.

Secondly, Mr. Gula discussed the Kirkwood Highway Master Plan, which is further along in development. This project involves collaboration with a team led by Rummel Klepper & Kahl (RKK), including Renaissance Planning and Qua Marketing, with a focus on engaging limited English-speaking communities. 4ward Planning will conduct a market and economic study to identify development opportunities along the corridor. The goal is to address challenges related to traffic, safety, access, and development in the area.

The Kirkwood Highway Master Plan acknowledges the diverse characteristics along the corridor, and the project aims to assist communities in shaping their future. The emphasis is on making the corridor more multimodal, safe, and accessible for everyone, not just motorists. Mr. Gula highlighted the importance of community engagement and the unique aspects of this project compared to other corridor studies.

He concluded by welcoming any questions or comments regarding the presented projects. No further questions were asked.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **11. Staff Report**

Ms. Tigist Zegeye reported the following updates:

- Staff participated in the FRA Long-Distance Study Northeast Working Group Meeting in Philadelphia on July 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff participated as a panelist at AMPO Data Interest Group meeting on August 24<sup>th</sup> covering Performance Management, available data sources and shared best practices.
- Wallace Montgomery was selected to lead the East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan. A kickoff meeting was held on August 22. The first Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for September 26 and a public workshop scheduled for October 26.
- Kittelson & Associates was selected to lead the South Claymont/Philadelphia Pike Corridor Master Plan.
- RK&K was selected to lead the SR2-Kirkwood Highway Corridor Land Use and Transportation Study.
- Hurley Franks & Associates was selected to lead the Rising Sun Mobility Friendly Development Guidelines.
- Staff continue to coordinate with DVRPC on a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant for the Philadelphia MSA.
- Staff met with researchers at Rowan University to discuss best practices in transportation equity measurement on August 30<sup>th</sup>.
- WILMAPCO Staff and DeIDOT hosted a joint TIP/CTP public meeting at the Newark Free Library on August 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff discussed the Transportation Justice Bus Connectivity Analysis at the APA Delaware Chapter's monthly Lunch and Learn meeting on August 31<sup>st</sup>.
- WILMAPCO is applying for the Neighborhood Access and Equity Program funding for "Reducing Truck Traffic in the Southbridge Neighborhood: A Feasibility Study of Alternative, More Efficient Routes" as recommended by the STAP.
- Staff are assisting DeIDOT and their consultant applying for Reconnecting Community and Neighborhoods Program funding for the I-95 Cap in Wilmington.
- The Village of Ardentown met on September 11 and endorsed the Ardens Transportation Plan by a vote of 34 to 7.
- WILMAPCO will have a table at Newark Community Day on September 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff will participate in the MDOT *Pre-Tour* virtual meeting on September 20<sup>th</sup>. The actual tour meeting is scheduled in person on October 31<sup>st</sup> @ the CC admin building.
- Join APA Delaware for a walking tour of STAR Campus development and a networking event at Grain Exchange on September 27. Another networking event on October 12 will feature a walking tour and discussion of the Ardens Transportation Plan at the Candlelight Theater. Check the APA Delaware website for details.

### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**ACTION:** Meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

**Attachments (0)**