

**PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
WILMAPCO Virtual Meeting, August 17, 2020

**ROLL CALL**

**Members Present:**

Mark Blake, GHADA  
Tom Fruehstorfer, City of Newark (Chair)  
Ken Grant, AAA Mid-Atlantic  
Bill Lower, Committee of 100  
Givvel Marrero, Delaware Hispanic Commission  
Ken Potts, Delmarva Rail Passenger Association  
Gail Seitz, City of New Castle  
Vic Singer, Civic League for New Castle County  
Dave Tancredi, Milltown-Limestone Civic Alliance

**Absent:**

Kevin Caneco, SNCC  
Katherine Caudle, Pike Creek Civic League  
Carlos de los Ramos, AARP  
Bill Dunn, Civic League for New Castle County  
Patricia Folk, Cecil County  
Mario Gangemi, Cecil County Chamber of Commerce  
Dick Janney, Southern New Castle County  
Mike Kaszyski, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce  
Glenn Pusey, Bear Glasgow Council  
Kevin Racine, City of Wilmington  
Jawann Saunders, Simonds Gardens Civic Association  
Barry Shotwell, 7/40 Alliance (Vice Chair)  
Norman Wehner, Cecil Board of Realtors

**Staff Members:**

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner  
Dave Gula, Principal Planner  
Randi Novakoff, Outreach Manager  
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner  
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

**Guests:**

Robert Hicks  
Camille Mapua

Minutes prepared by Dawn Voss from recording.

Tom Fruehstorfer, PAC Chair, called the meeting to order.

**1. Approval of the June 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Vic Singer and seconded by Mr. Tom Fruehstorfer the PAC approved the June 15, 2020 meeting minutes.

**2. Public Comment Period:**

None.

**3. Executive Director's Report:**

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said the WILMAPCO Council meeting was held on July 9, 2020. Council had a number of transportation improvement amendments, including: funding the replacement of the Belvidere Road Bridge over the CSX Railroad in Cecil County, revised funding for capital and operating assistance for MDOT's Small Urban Transit System in Cecil County, and revised funding for SR 273 and I-95 intersection improvements for DelDOT in New Castle County. Council also amended the WILMAPCO Project Prioritization Process and released a draft of the WILMAPCO Public Participation Plan for public comment. There were presentations on the 2020 Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending Update, 2021 Capital Transportation Program based on the bond bill, and Nonmotorized Impacts of COVID-19.

Ms. Zegeye shared the following public outreach information:

- Staff has been working on the Route 9 Master Plan video.
- Staff has been developing strategies to collect parents' and residents' feedback for the Bayard Safe Routes to School Program.
- Staff has been discussing the Title VI Plan with the staff of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in support of their upcoming Plan update.
- Staff is participating in workshops to provide feedback on a national research program guidebook for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in transportation and supporting DelDOT in implementing that guidebook in Delaware.
- Staff has been asked to present during an August 27<sup>th</sup> peer exchange with MPOs in Florida to discuss our experience integrating climate resiliency in the planning process.
- We have been working with the Hawaii MPO to communicate our efforts on demographic projections.
- For the Air Quality Partnership, staff has developed graphics for the rescheduled Air Quality Awareness Week, which is September 21<sup>st</sup> through the 25<sup>th</sup>.
- August 18<sup>th</sup>, staff will be attending the Safe Kids Delaware Board meeting.
- Staff is planning to have a virtual workshop for the Southern New Castle County Master Plan.
- A package of multimodal recommendations for the Newport Transportation Study were shared with the project management committee on June 25<sup>th</sup> and the advisory committee meeting is being planned for late August.
- A virtual public workshop for the Governor Printz Boulevard Study will be held mid-September.
- The Churchman's Crossing virtual workshop is scheduled for September 16<sup>th</sup>.
- On September 25<sup>th</sup>, staff will participate in the Maryland MPO Roundtable.
- The US 202 Master Plan virtual workshop is tentatively scheduled for September 28<sup>th</sup>.
- The FY 2021 Work Program has been approved by Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations. There were five new projects for which requests for proposals were prepared. The selection process is complete and we have selected JMT for the Union Street Configuration for the City of Wilmington, Century Engineering for the Port of Wilmington Circulation Study and for the City

of New Castle Transportation Plan Update, CPCS for the First and Last Mile Freight Network Development Study and for the Statewide Truck Parking Study.

Mr. Singer asked to verify that the Churchman's Crossing Study workshop will be September 26<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Zegeye replied that it will be on September 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

#### **4. Approval of 2020 Public Participation Plan – Randi Novakoff**

Ms. Randi Novakoff said the process for the Public Participation Plan began in the summer of 2018 with a telephone public opinion survey. Staff reviewed examples of plans that other MPOs have done and their best practices. Staff participated in a peer exchange to help another MPO develop their Public Participation Plan. An online Public Participation Survey was conducted from May to June 2019. One hundred and eighty people participated in that survey, which was also offered in Spanish resulting in eight responses in Spanish. WILMAPCO and DeIDOT held a joint public workshop in September of 2019 with about thirty people in attendance. The Plan was revised to better incorporate the Transportation Justice recommendations. The Plan was presented again earlier this year to release the document for a public comment period. It was released for public comment from July 10<sup>th</sup> through September 9<sup>th</sup>. We issued a press release and wrote newsletter and E-news articles as well as posted the information on our website. A social media ad was issued to promote the availability of the public comment period.

A new goal, Goal 4, was added to the Plan. This is where the Transportation Justice recommendations were integrated into the Plan. We are going to strive for more socially equitable, representative involvement in all of our activities.

Mr. Vic Singer commented that on page i, there is a quote from the Federal Highway Administration guidelines that says, "An effective public involvement process provides for an open exchange of information and ideas between the public and transportation decision makers." On page 3, under "Importance of Public Input" it says, "A proactive public involvement process is one that provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access to major transportation decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing transportation plans and programs." On page 5, it talks about providing parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the planning process and on page 4 it says, "provide opportunities for early and continuing involvement throughout the transportation planning process." Mr. Singer asked if the ideas expressed in those words are new to this version of the plan or if they were also effectively included in prior versions. Ms. Novakoff replied that they were included in prior versions. Mr. Singer asked if they only apply to WILMAPCO staff or do they also apply to contractors being paid in whole or part by WILMAPCO. Ms. Novakoff replied that they apply to any study conducted by WILMAPCO. Mr. Singer then commented on communications involving the updates of the Churchman's Crossing Study that he and two other members of Civic League met with Mr. Andrew Bing. Mr. Bing said they will not be preparing a written summary for public review. Mr. Fruehstorfer asked if Mr. Singer's comment was about the PPP or that Churchman's Crossing was not done correctly. Mr. Singer continued that since Mr. Bing indicated that he will not attribute comments to anybody in particular, the comments will not be subject to rebuttal. This is not an effective public communication process and that it violates a provision in the code of ethics of AICP.

Mr. Fruehstorfer commented that it sounds like Mr. Singer's comments were about how the process may not have worked but not a comment related to this PPP. Mr. Singer disagreed, saying that if the PPP is there merely to look good, then leave those sections in it. If not, say what the intent is, which is to suppress public comment. Mr. Fruehstorfer asked Mr. Singer if he had any problem with how this Plan is written and if he had any suggestions on how this plan should be changed. Mr. Singer responded that unless we are interested in enforcing the provisions in this Plan, then we ought to remove the provisions involving public participation that we intend to ignore. Mr. Fruehstorfer replied that the intent is to have public participation, so he does not think that it makes sense to remove that section. Mr. Dave Gula offered that the listening tours for the Churchman's Study were a small piece of the public outreach. As part of the stakeholder interviews we wanted people to be able to speak freely without worrying about retribution from publicly embarrassing an employee of DeIDOT or one of the other agencies with whom we work, and that is why the discussions are not written down verbatim. Mr. Singer replied that the desire for anonymity does not excuse keeping the summary of the comments received private. Mr. Gula replied that as this is one small part of the entire public outreach plan, Mr. Singer will have ample opportunity to repeat every statement that he made in the listening tour. The point of the listening tour is to get as much candid information from the stakeholders as possible, and some will not participate if everything they say in that listening tour interview becomes part of the public record.

Ms. Tigist Zegeye said normally when we do this kind of stakeholder interview, we start with elected officials, because we like to inform them of the project before we hear from other people. We also speak to private entities in the vicinity as well as with community representatives, so this is a normal procedure that we do with the consultant team. We do not want to influence the process, so public agencies like DeIDOT, the County, and WILMAPCO are not present so they can openly discuss what their issues are. This is not to avoid public outreach or to hide anything. We just want the people to have an open dialog with the consultant team as we are just beginning the project. It is not contrary to the Public Participation Plan or how we conduct public outreach. We have done this for all of our projects. Mr. Singer responded that Mr. Bing was given the opportunity to put words in his mouth, he would like the opportunity to see what those words are. Mr. Fruehstorfer called for a motion to vote on changing the Plan. Mr. Singer responded that he would like a commitment that we are going to enforce the principles that he read. Mr. Singer said he would like to see all the summaries of all the comments that were made, and he would like to see it in writing. Mr. Fruehstorfer replied that for the reasons mentioned, that is not available.

Mr. Singer made a motion to table this action. The motion was not seconded.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Ken Grant and seconded by Mr. Mark Blake the PAC approved the 2020 Public Participation Plan.

Mr. Vic Singer voted no.

Motion passed

(08-17-20-02)

## **PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

### **5. Southern New Castle County Master Plan Transportation Element**

Mr. Dave Gula said the Southern New Castle County Master Plan has both a land use element and a transportation element. The purpose of this plan is to create a publicly supported vision for Southern New Castle County. We are partnering with New Castle County to explore land use changes and issues related to land use and planning, as well as looking at transportation infrastructure. The recommendations that come out of this plan will be used to update WILMAPCO documents, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as well as the New Castle County Comprehensive Plan. From the RTP and TIP, it could also go into DeIDOT's Capital Transportation Program, so there is a coordinated effort to work on this plan. Improvement efforts from multiple previous plans for this area are being reviewed including the US 301 Implementation, which is the new highway that crossed southern New Castle County. This project began in October 2018 with a kickoff meeting and two visioning sessions held in two different municipalities below the canal. Some preliminary land use scenarios were presented to the public at a third workshop, then a scenario analysis was performed on the preferred one. A draft plan was released to the public last fall and another workshop was held. Comments were collected and the report for the transportation element is being finalized as we work with New Castle County to finalize the land use element.

A public information session was held on October 17, 2018 in Odessa Fire Hall with fifty attendees. The first visioning session was held January 31, 2019 in the Odessa Fire Hall with more than one hundred attendees. The session was very popular and people who were unable to attend contacted the County asking for a second session, so a second community visioning session was held on March 13, 2019 in the Middletown Fire Hall with seventy attendees. New Castle County held a public workshop for land use development on June 24, 2019. The last public workshop to review those scenarios was October 7, 2019, with eighty attendees.

At the visioning sessions a series of poll questions were posed. We broke the large group into small groups then asked attendees specific questions about their interests and goals for the area. By the end of the workshop the votes were tallied so people could see exactly what the poll showed. Expanded public transportation was overwhelmingly popular with 49% of the vote. The next most popular with 17% was more and safer walking and biking paths throughout southern New Castle County. Congestion reduction came in next with 11%, then better east-west connections around Middletown with 8%. Concern with maintenance and keeping up with growth had 7%. More local road networks and transportation investments before development each had 4%.

Some of the other comments suggested the need to review and provide public transportation to 55 and older communities. These members of the community are not always located where bus routes are and so providing them with transportation as they stop driving is a challenge. There were a lot of concerns about the plans for growth around the Town of Townsend. A bike trail on the south side of the C&D Canal like the one on the north side was requested. There was some negative feedback about the traffic in Middletown. Some people thought the Route 301 toll is too expensive for a daily commute. The comments are being tracked to use them moving forward with solutions to these concerns.

Land use and transportation scenarios were developed. As part of the visioning sessions the community was asked what they would want as part of those scenarios. These were

reviewed by the Staff Committee and the Advisory Committee before they were taken to the public.

Three scenarios were developed. Each scenario went through DeIDOT's travel demand model for a phase 1 analysis. In the phase 1 analysis results, there was little difference between the three scenarios. The link level analysis looks at the capacity of the roadways and what the volumes at different segments rather than at the intersections. Scenario 1 and 3 are very similar around the Route 1 area and slightly different in scenario 2.

In October of 2019, the scenarios were presented to the public. There was an even amount of public support for scenarios 2 and 3, but many people asked that we not go with scenario 1. After following up with some of the municipalities in the area and having further conversation with the county council members in the area, it was determined that the preferred scenario would incorporate elements of scenario 2 and 3 plus some additional employment and housing in the Townsend area. The preferred scenario would try to funnel future growth into areas around the municipalities in the areas that already have substantial growth. This scenario was then moved to phase 2 of the transportation analysis which is much more detailed.

The purpose of the detailed traffic analysis is to identify the need for road or intersection improvements that are not already included in DeIDOT's Capital Transportation Program (CTP), WILMAPCO's Long Range Plan, or an existing Transportation Improvement District (TID) There are three TIDs within this study area; the Southern New Castle County TID, the Eastown Middletown TID, and the Westown Middletown TID. The analysis looks at existing AM and PM peak hour Level of Service (LOS) analyzed at eight selected intersections using the Synchro modeling tool. There are twenty-seven additional intersections that are already being studied separately under the TIP program for potential improvements, so those were not analyzed as part of this study. Demographic information for the year 2020 was projected out to the year 2050 demographic forecast for the preferred scenario as provided by WILMAPCO and the Delaware Population Consortium. The level of service analysis was performed for existing conditions (2020), the year 2050 with no improvements, and the year 2050 with improvements that are already in the CTP, TIP or RTP and are funded. The detailed traffic analysis shows that for the AM and PM peak, four of the eight intersections in the analysis present a LOS challenge. The full analysis is in Appendix A of the transportation report, which is available on the website.

In addition to the traffic analysis, people in multiple workshops shared other improvements they want in the transportation network. The public had already expressed that walking and biking were very important in the entire study area. The recommendations received were included in the New Castle County Bike Plan. The goal is for residents of Southern New Castle County to be able to leave their neighborhoods walking or biking comfortably and connect to the network at the C&D Canal where the bike lane at St. George's Bridge will allow people to cross and access the bike improvements north of the canal. The second general goal was to design bike routes that are DeIDOT Bike Level of Stress Level 1 and 2 to allow people to bike outside of their neighborhoods. Mr. Fruehstorfer asked if the other nonmotorized recommendations referred to sidewalks. Mr. Gula replied yes, and that in most cases in Southern New Castle County the side paths would be multi-use allowing bicycles and pedestrians to use the same facility. Sidewalks are within the municipalities and some of the

neighborhoods. Part of the follow up is to perform a gap analysis as part of the NCC Bike Plan.

The next step of this component of the Plan is to take the comments being received and add them to the Transportation Element Report. On August 20<sup>th</sup>, we will seek the TAC approval of this document. On August 26<sup>th</sup>, there will be a virtual public workshop to explain the plan and walk through all the proposals and recommendations. On September 10<sup>th</sup> we will seek endorsement of the Southern New Castle County Transportation Element from WILMAPCO's Council. We will continue to coordinate with New Castle County, because the land use element is going through their approval process.

The Transportation Element has been on our website for about a week. Comments are welcome until the Council adoption. The day before adoption, the comments will be compiled and added to the document. To comment, go to [www.wilmapco.org/sncc](http://www.wilmapco.org/sncc) or email Mr. Gula at [dgula@wilmapco.org](mailto:dgula@wilmapco.org).

Mr. Fruehstorfer said that it seemed like the public wanted public transportation and asked if Mr. Gula thought the people making those comments were a representative group or were they a group that would have been slanted toward wanting public transportation. Mr. Gula replied that it was a popular theme in a lot of public outreach. The challenge is that you are not really sure if the people who come to the workshop are the ones that have the issues. We did hear a lot about the senior population, questioning their options as people age and cannot drive. A variety of people expressed interest in rail, perhaps trolley style rail, from some of the surrounding neighborhoods into Middletown. It is encouraging that people are thinking about transit use, but the challenge is that there is not enough density and population in the area. DART was present at all the workshops to take those comments and they will continue to seek solutions. Mr. Fruehstorfer asked if it is possible that someday it may be dense enough for public transportation. Mr. Gula responded the zoning categories south of the canal are an acre or just under an acre per unit. Eight dwelling units per acre is what is needed to get to the densities that make transit sustainable. Mr. Gula suggests light transit will continue to work but keeping transit improvements to more densely developed areas like Middletown makes the most sense for DTC.

Mr. Singer commented that there is no such thing as density sufficient to support a transit system in the north east in the United States. Not even the density of Manhattan in New York is sufficient to support the subway system in New York. The subway system in New York survives because of subsidies at the local, state, and federal level and we cannot even think of anything near that here.

## **6. Air Quality Impacts of COVID-19**

Mr. Bill Swiatek said this presentation is part of a series of presentations WILMAPCO has done including the changes to road traffic, public transit, and nonmotorized transportation during the lockdown. This is looking at how the air quality has changed during the pandemic. First, consider air quality itself and the fact that it has been improving over the past century in the U.S. The passage of the Clean Air Act in 1970 helped continue to reduce emissions from six common pollutants including ozone and PM2.5. This has been at the same time that population, GDP, and VMT have risen. There has been an acceleration of this due to changes made during the lockdown. Some of the major changes

were that more than half of the population was staying home, abiding by the rules, and there was a 50% decline in traffic levels. NASA images showing typical NO<sub>2</sub> emissions averaged in the mid-Atlantic region for the last five years and then from March of 2020 illustrate how much those emissions declined. Similar images from all over the world show a similar trend. In media reports, early on many stories talked about really huge global drops in air pollution. Then some more nuanced stories came out saying despite telework, not much has changed in air quality. The media reports have been widely varied in regard to how the lockdown has affected air pollution and that is the basis for this analysis.

To do this analysis we looked at a couple of pollutants that were really of interest to us. One being ozone, because we are in a nonattainment area for ozone for New Castle County and for Cecil County. Because of this, as part of our long-range plan and TIP we have to do a determination that shows our ozone meets the standards that have been set for the region. In New Castle County we are in maintenance for fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) so that is another pollutant of interest to us. PM<sub>2.5</sub> is airborne particles such as smoke, dust, soot, and salt. Ground level ozone is formed when the emission of nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) react with one another. Health impacts of ozone include respiratory conditions such as asthma and reduced lung function. PM<sub>2.5</sub> has been tied to chronic pulmonary disease, and childhood pneumonia.

NPR did an analysis across the U.S. to show the changes in median ozone levels in 2020 compared with the average of the previous five years. Los Angeles had 14% less ozone. Houston had 12% less. Pittsburg had about 9% less. The interesting question that arose from the story is why we did not see a bigger decline in ozone with the lockdown since there was much less traffic. Reviewing where New Castle County's VOCs, NO<sub>x</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> come from, the answer to that is that the share that comes from non-diesel light duty vehicles is pretty small. Only a quarter of VOCs and NO<sub>x</sub> come from those light duty vehicles and only 6% of the PM<sub>2.5</sub>. There are fairly similar numbers in Cecil County as well, with a lower share of VOCs from light duty vehicles as well. The data for our region, using the same analysis, found a similar result to the national analysis. In comparing our region to the Philadelphia metro area, which contains parts of four states, the month of April is analyzed because that was a month when everyone was in lockdown. So, in comparing April 2020 to the previous five years' averages, ozone improved about 15% in New Castle County, 10% in Cecil County, and 16% for the Philadelphia MSA. Another way to look at this is to look at the bad ozone days and consider how many our region had in 2020 compared to the best year out of the previous twenty years. The data was through May 31<sup>st</sup> and the twenty-year best year had ten bad ozone days, but in 2020 through May 31<sup>st</sup>, there was only one bad ozone day. The Philadelphia MSA had three bad ozone days in 2020 versus the previous twenty-year best of seventeen bad ozone days. PM<sub>2.5</sub> results are not quite as strong. New Castle County saw less of an improvement over the past five-year average. The PM<sub>2.5</sub> was reduced 4%. The Philadelphia MSA saw an improvement of 10%. Cecil County saw a significant improvement in PM<sub>2.5</sub> versus the five-year average, with 28%. In terms of the bad ozone or bad PM<sub>2.5</sub> days, our region was a little bit better than average in terms of the Philadelphia MSA with fifty-nine in 2020 compared to the twenty-year best of sixty-two. New Castle County broke even with the twenty-year best of twenty-two days.

Mr. Fruehstorfer asked if there was any reason why Cecil County improved so much more than New Castle County. Mr. Swiatek replied that he thinks part of it may be because Cecil only has one monitor that registers while New Castle County has a few more, so the numbers get a little more balanced out in New Castle County.



**7. Other Business**

None

**8. Adjournment**

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. Singer and seconded by Mr. Mark Blake the PAC adjourned.

Motion passed

**(08-17-20-03)**

**Attachments: (0)**