

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
October 16, 2025

An in-person only meeting of the Joint Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Air Quality Subcommittee (AQS) was held on Thursday, October 16, 2025, at Lums Pond, 1068 Howell School Rd, Bear, DE 19701, Area 4.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Cooper Bowers, from New Castle County Department of Land Use, and TAC Chair, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:13 a.m.

2. TAC Members present:

Bruce Allen, Delaware Department of Transportation AQS member
Cooper Bowers, New Castle County Department of Land Use, AQS Member
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning
Michael Fortner, City of Newark
William Goldman, Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning, AQS member
Shawn Kiernan, Maryland Department of Transportation, AQS member
Tina Merrill, Department of Natural Resources and Environment
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation, AQS member

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
Delaware Office of State Planning
Maryland Department of the Environment
Maryland State Highway Administration
Town of Elkton Planning

TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:

Amtrak
Diamond State Port Corporation
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Guests and Invitees:

Taylor Englert, DNREC, AQS Member
Al Layola, Delaware Transit Corporation
Rachel McGuire, Jacobs
Andrea Quinn, Jacobs

Staff:

Leonard Bonarek, Senior Planner
Dan Blevins, Principal Planner
Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
Sharen Elcock, Executive Assistant

Elizabeth Espinal, Administrative Assistant
Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Colleen Stroud, Regional Planner
Jake Thompson, Senior Planner
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner
Dawn Voss, Outreach Coordinator
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Espinal.

3. MINUTES

Approval of September 18, 2025, TAC Meeting Minutes and August 21, 2025, AQS Notes.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Cathy Smith and seconded by Mr. Michael Fortner, the TAC minutes and AQS Notes are approved.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Ms. Heather Dunigan gave an update on the October 7, 2025, Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group (NMTWG) meeting. The meeting featured several presentations, including the Sidewalk Gap Analysis, the Mobility Opportunities Plan and Connectivity Analysis. The NMTWG members expressed that the initiatives are moving in a positive direction and are looking forward to incorporating the Mobility Opportunities Plan into their future project prioritization work.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

ACTION ITEMS

6. To recommend endorsement of the 2025 Mobility Opportunities Plan

Mr. Bill Swiatek presented the updated Mobility Opportunities Plan (MOP), which identifies the most pressing transportation barriers in the region and provides strategies to improve both mobility and economic opportunity.

The plan was developed by a diverse working group including staff from the University of Delaware, state and federal transportation agencies, state and county officials, residents, and community benefit organizations.

The MOP updates the 2019 Transportation Justice Plan while remaining consistent with recent federal guidance. Key updates and features of the document include:

- Deeper, more granular analysis of census data, housing value data, and an expanded set of transportation analyses (increasing from 12 to 20, covering topics like crash rates and traffic volumes).
- Dedicated chapters covering Title VI requirements, analysis of economic opportunity communities, and detailed strategies for language assistance (including support for non-English speakers and low literacy).
- A section on mobility challenged groups, which includes youth for the first time, and the required ADA self-evaluation.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Tina Merrill and seconded by Mr. William Goldman, the TAC recommends endorsement of the 2025 Mobility Opportunities Plan.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

7. Newport Station NEPA Study

Mr. Albert Loyola, the Chief Customer Experience Officer for DTC, provided an update on the Newport Train Station Study. Mr. Loyola has a long history in rail operations, including involvement in the original Newark and Claymont train station projects.

Mr. Loyola reintroduced the Newport Train Station concept, which was first examined in a smaller feasibility study in 2013. The current effort is focused on the potential for the station to fit within the SEPTA network, serving as the fifth commuter rail station in New Castle County (joining Newark, Fairplay, Wilmington, and Claymont).

The distance between the Wilmington and Fairplay stations meets the necessary standards for a commuter stop. A key operational factor noted is that the proposed site falls south of Wilmington, which requires working through different operating rules for train movement in that area compared to routes north of the city.

The project received renewed funding and restarted over the summer. An Advisory Committee held its first meeting in September. The team is preparing for the first public workshop committee meeting scheduled for the following Monday, October 20, at 4:00 PM at the Newport (Minquas) Fire Hall on James Street.

The study is an 18-month program aiming for a 30% concept design and initial NEPA documentation by the programs' conclusion. The current funding is expected to cover the full design phase, but funding for the final construction phase will need to be secured later. The reception to the project has been positive among various stakeholders, including town officials, elected representatives, and the public. Mr. Loyola noted that Newport is unique because it is a more walkable community, resembling the development style of the "Main Line" stations in Pennsylvania where residents live around the station.

Consequently, the station is not intended to be a major park-and-ride facility like Fairplay; the parking component will be smaller than the large lots at Fairplay or Newark. Mr. Loyola explained that its design is intended to reinforce the existing community and align with multi-use development plans taking shape along the Newport corridor. Mr. Loyola emphasized that the station must be a modern facility featuring high-level platforms and canopies. He added that Amtrak is involved due to their ownership and operation of the rail line, and to answer questions regarding freight traffic in the area, which has an impact on the station's design and operation.

Additionally, Mr. Dave Gula made a point of historical reference noting that planning efforts related to this study date back to 2011, and voiced support for this effort.

8. Regional Sidewalk Gap Analysis and Prioritization

Ms. Heather Dunigan provided an update on the Regional Sidewalk Gap Analysis and Prioritization project which is included in the FY 2026 UPWP and is using a systematic approach to identify and prioritize sidewalk needs across the region. The project was included in the UPWP in response to frequent sidewalk requests from elected officials, towns, residents,

and civic associations for small, specific sidewalk improvements needed for accessing transit, supermarkets, and other key destinations.

The study aims to provide a systematic approach for managing numerous small-scale projects, focusing on the entire region with an emphasis on Core, Center, and Community Transportation Investment Areas.

Planning Partners coordinating the planning include representatives from State Departments of Transportation (DelDOT and MDOT), and transit agencies (Cecil County Transit and DART First State), and counties (New Castle and Cecil). The Advisory Committee includes representation from all towns, both counties, ADA staff from the DOTs, school district transportation coordinators, and umbrella civic associations. The consultant team of Renaissance Planning and RK&K were retained for the project and Ecopia was selected as the data partner.

The project is divided into two phases and is anticipated to take approximately one year in total.

- **Phase One:** This phase focuses on a high-level, region-wide assessment of sidewalk needs. Key deliverables include the initial AI-generated sidewalk inventory and a regional top-tier assessment of gaps. An initial product is expected by Winter for immediate use by partner agencies.
- **Phase Two:** This phase will involve on-the-ground assessment to back-check the AI data, investigate areas highlighted through crowdsourcing outreach, and develop specific recommendations and planning-level cost estimates.

Ms. Dunigan added that Task I, data collection, is complete. The team is using a variety of data sources including:

1. Locations with high pedestrian activity drivers, such as bus stop usage, commercial properties, community centers, schools, areas with high pedestrian crash rates, and overall population/employment density.
2. AI-generated initial identification of sidewalk presence allows the team to obtain initial data in two weeks--a task that would have taken human staff months to complete.
3. Technology, including Replica data and Streetlight information, to analyze travel patterns and overall mobility.

The AI inventory uses recent near-map imagery (from the late winter to avoid tree cover issues) and can provide details down to sidewalk width and different crosswalk types. It was noted that as Ecopia is an AI technology partner which is still evolving, it can be confused by sidewalk-like structures or by the distinction between public and private property. A GIS layer of the AI inventory will be available upon request by winter, and an interactive dashboard is currently available for stakeholders to examine the data.

The goal is to focus on filling the worst-of-the-worst existing gaps and those that provide the greatest benefit to the traveling population.

This will involve:

- Assessing the quality and importance of gaps during Phase Two.
- Analyzing land use factors and incorporating big data and outreach results.

- Coordinating with DelDOT's comprehensive pedestrian Level of Comfort analysis to leverage parallel efforts.

A broad crowdsourcing outreach push is underway using flyers and a project website with an interactive map. Residents are encouraged to mark crossing challenges, missing sidewalks, safety concerns, and maintenance issues.

Mr. David Dahlstrom suggested presenting the material at a workshop in Cecil County to help get the word out. Ms. Dunigan acknowledged the suggestion and the benefit of further outreach.

Mr. Dahlstrom requested an explanation of the graphics showing crosswalk pavement types (standard, continental, and ladder). Ms. Dunigan clarified that the graphics refer to different crosswalk striping patterns (standard is two parallel lines, continental is stripes with a border, and ladder is two parallel lines with stripes).

Mr. Dahlstrom asked if the program would be looking at cross-analysis (tying data layers together). Ms. Dunigan confirmed that the data side is already working to merge the AI-generated GIS layer with the roadway network, crash history, and bicycle level of comfort layers. She added they intend to incorporate the land use layer to better filter gaps on public right-of-way, noting that while the focus is public property, gaps between a bus stop and a major commercial property (like a grocery store) might be worth noting.

9. Delaware Rail Plan

Mr. Bruce Allen, DelDOT, introduced Ms. Rachel McGuire and Ms. Andrea Quinn from Jacobs to provide an update on the Delaware Rail Plan. He noted that the plan, last updated in 2011, is being revised to meet new federal requirements and guide future rail policy and investments. Mr. Allen added that DelDOT's Planning Section will also oversee freight, aviation, and rail planning in coordination with MPOs and other partners.

Ms. Rachel McGuire reported that the updated plan is expected in 2026 and will outline public and private rail investments and strategies in compliance with FRA guidelines. She announced that a public survey would soon be released and encouraged participation from all stakeholders.

Ms. Andrea Quinn stated that Jacobs and DelDOT have been engaging with Amtrak, SEPTA, DTC, and freight and agricultural partners to assess current rail conditions and identify future needs. She emphasized that the plan would align with statewide freight and aviation updates and DelDOT's long-range transportation goals. An advisory committee meeting will be held this winter to review progress and next steps.

10. Regional Progress Report

Mr. Bill Swiatek presented an overview of the Regional Progress Report, noting that it serves as the first step in updating WILMAPCO's Long Range Transportation Plan, scheduled for adoption in March 2027. The report evaluates progress toward implementing actions from previous and current long-range plans using both quantitative and qualitative assessments, summarized through a red-yellow-green indicator system. It also incorporates and expands upon required national performance measures.

Mr. Swiatek reviewed several key regional trends and findings:

- The percentage of residents driving alone has declined to 72%, with a notable increase in telecommuting.

- Since 2019, Vehicles Miles Traveled (VMT) has decreased by 11% in Cecil County and 13% in New Castle County, aligning with state climate goals for reduced travel demand.
- Survey data showed 9% of residents report difficulty accessing healthy and affordable groceries, rising to 35% among zero-car households and 20% among low-income households.
- Regional fatal crash rates per VMT have remained relatively stable over the past two decades.
- TIP Spending with TIAs: Funding for multimodal projects has increased significantly, while roadway-only projects have declined. Investment within Center Transportation Investment Areas (TIAs) has also risen, aligning with growth and livability goals.
- Freight and Bottlenecks: Nearly all identified truck bottleneck locations now include active or planned TIP projects.
- East Coast Greenway: 90% of segments in New Castle County are completed or funded, with much more limited progress in Cecil County.
- Transit Performance: Cecil Transit has achieved on-time performance above 85%, while DART continues to maintain nearly 70% efficiency in New Castle County.
- Electric Vehicle Charging: Public EV charging stations have grown from 2 in 2012 to over 140 regionwide, including 132 in New Castle County and 16 in Cecil County.

Mr. Swiatek said that of WILMAPCO's approximately 60 subregional plans developed since 1996, about 80% have achieved at least partial implementation, with 20% fully completed.

Mr. Swiatek concluded that the Regional Progress Report is approximately 80% complete, with finalization expected later this year. Council endorsement is anticipated by early 2026, potentially as soon as January, pending review of the completed document in December.

INFORMATION ITEMS

11. Staff Report

Mr. Dave Gula reported the following updates:

- On September 21st, staff participated in Newark Community Day.
- On September 23rd, the Southbridge Truck Bypass Study's Advisory Committee met.
- On September 24th, Strategies for State Policies and Spending were released and staff participated in a public workshop for NCC at the Route 9 Innovation Center in New Castle City.
- On September 25th, staff participated in the 2025 Delaware Highway Safety Summit.
- On September 26th, staff attended a site meeting for the Jackson St Road Diet with residents, elected officials, City staff and DelDOT.
- On September 29th, a joint DelDOT/WILMAPCO TIP/CTP Public Workshop was held with 23 participants in attendance.
- On October 1st, staff held consultant interviews for the Wilmington SS4A Safety Action Plan grant.
- On October 2nd, the first Advisory Committee of the WILMAPCO Sidewalk Gap Analysis project was held. The project seeks to identify sidewalk gaps in New Castle and Cecil Counties.
- On October 6th, staff attended the United Neighbors meeting in Wilmington.
- On October 7th, staff participated in Delaware's Quarterly Mobile Sources Planning Group meeting.

- On October 8th, staff participated in the Downes Walk to School Day and staff presented at the Windy Hills Walkable Community Workshop.
- On October 9th, the Windy Hills Walkable Community Workshop walkabout and mapping occurred.
- On October 14th, staff hosted the Wilmington Initiatives Partners meeting.
- On October 15th, staff attended the CPMC Fall meeting at the Talleyville Fire Hall.
- On October 18th, the Lancaster Avenue Walkable Community Workshop will be held.
- On October 22nd, the Philadelphia MSA Climate Action Plan's Steering Committee will meet.
- On October 28th, the Southbridge Truck Bypass Study Public Workshop will take place from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Neighborhood House.
- On October 30th, the East Elkton Plan's Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On November 2nd, the Ardens Transportation Plan's Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On November 5th, staff will attend the MDOT CTP Tour meeting in Cecil County.
- On November 17th, the SNCC LUTP Information Workshop will be held in Odessa Fire Hall.
- On November 19th, the CXMC Fall meeting will be held in DelDOT Canal District Office.
- On November 20th, the Route 9 Monitoring Committee will meet.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.

Attachments (0)