

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 20, 2025

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, March 20, 2025, at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, DE 19713 and via video conference/conference call.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Cooper Bowers, from Delaware Department of Transportation, and TAC Chair, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

2. TAC Members present:

Benjamin Allen, Maryland State Highway Administration
Cooper Bowers, Delaware Department of Transportation
Samantha Bulkilvish, Delaware Office of State Planning
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning
William Goldman, Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning
Gwinneth Kaminsky Rivera, City of Wilmington Planning
Shawn Kiernan, Maryland Department of Transportation
Tina Merrill, Department of Natural Resources and Environment
Jeanne Minner, Town of Elkton Planning
Matthew Rogers, New Castle County Department of Land Use
Catherine Salarano, Maryland Department of the Environment
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

TAC Ex-Officio Members present:

TAC Members absent:

City of Newark
City of Wilmington Department of Public Works
Delaware Division of Small Business, Development, and Tourism
Delaware River and Bay Authority

TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:

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

Guests and Invitees:

Regina Aris, BMC
Robert Bullock, PAC member
Nicci Johnson, DelDOT Finance
Pamela Keeney, DNREC, AQS member
Quinn Krenzel, Town of Elkton

Staff:

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

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Espinal.

3. MINUTES

Approval of the February 20, 2025, TAC Meeting Minutes.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Matthew Rodgers and seconded by Ms. Catherine Smith, the February 20, 2025, TAC Minutes are approved.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

None.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

ACTION ITEMS

None.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

6. FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Ms. Tigist Zegeye presented WILMAPCO's proposed FY2026 UPWP. She began by outlining the funding sources and cash commitments. On the Delaware side, funding includes approximately \$2.5 million from the FHWA, \$943,000 from the FTA, and \$808,000 from the State of Delaware. Additional contributions include \$31,500 from New Castle County and \$11,796 from the City of Wilmington, which is allocated between the Public Works and Planning Departments. On the Maryland side, the FHWA is providing approximately \$94,000, FTA providing \$33,000 with MDOT and Cecil County splitting the 20% match equally, 10% contributions, respectively, amounting to \$15,856. The total funding for FY2026 is approximately \$4.4 million.

The subsequent page provides details on the allocation of funds, covering 13 tasks ranging from administration to the monitoring and implementation of regional studies. A significant portion of the funding is directed towards monitoring and sub-regional studies, as well as coordinating efforts with member agencies. Additionally, funding supports RTP implementation and administrative functions, including staffing and committee operations.

In February, WILMAPCO issued a call for project submissions from member agencies, which include municipalities in both New Castle and Cecil counties. Three project submissions were received from member agencies, with two additional projects proposed by staff.

The first submission, from DelDOT, focuses on intersection control evaluations and alternative screening in New Castle County. This initiative aims to apply a data-driven, performance-based approach to intersection evaluations, following FHWA guidance. Initially derived from the Kirkwood Highway Plan, DelDOT identified the potential for statewide application. The requested funding amount is \$100,000 for up to six intersections. WILMAPCO staff recommend expanding the project scope to include additional intersections, increasing the proposed funding to \$200,000.

The second submission is a joint proposal from New Castle County and DelDOT for the Southern New Castle County Growth Area Land Use and Transportation Plan. This project seeks to update the TID and the Southern New Castle County Master Plan, which was last revised several years ago. The requested funding is \$200,000, with an anticipated completion timeline extending to 2027. Staff recommend including this project in the UPWP with the understanding that additional time will be required for completion.

The third submission, jointly proposed by New Castle County and Cecil County, is the Logistics and Fulfillment Center Transportation Land Use Impact Study. This study will evaluate the effects of logistics and fulfillment centers on roadway infrastructure in both counties, considering the facilities' size and operational impact. The requested funding for this project is \$60,000. However, WILMAPCO staff recommend increasing the budget to \$100,000 to ensure comprehensive analysis and presentation of findings to both counties and stakeholders.

An additional staff-recommended project involves conducting a Sidewalk Gap Analysis for New Castle and Cecil counties, with a proposed budget of \$200,000. This project is in response to frequent requests from DOTs and member agencies to assess sidewalk connectivity gaps within the region. WILMAPCO plans to collaborate with both counties and their respective DOTs on this initiative.

The final submission pertains to the Delaware Statewide Freight Plan Update, with a funding request of \$75,000. WILMAPCO will contribute \$50,000 towards the update, alongside contributions from Dover/Kent MPO and Sussex County, with most of the funding provided by DelDOT. An additional \$25,000 is allocated for a truck parking count at various park-and-ride locations in coordination with DTC.

The following page outlines consultant funding allocations for FY2026. Newly proposed projects are highlighted in yellow, while ongoing initiatives include data analysis, intersection and congestion management, and the implementation and monitoring of sub-regional reports. The total consultant budget is approximately \$2 million.

A subsequent page details the allocation of total funds by federal, state, and local agencies. This information was shared with the Council last week and will be presented to the PAC in April, with the PAC focusing on the public outreach component of the UPWP. The draft UPWP will be available for public review from March 24 through April 24, with final adoption by the Council scheduled for May 1. Following approval, the UPWP will be submitted to the FHWA, FTA, DelDOT, and MDOT for approval, with an anticipated implementation date of July 1.

7. Claymont Area Master Plan

Ms. Heather Dunigan provided an update on the Claymont Area Master Plan, noting that she had previously shared information with the TAC last month. She provided an overview of supplemental planning and community engagement underway.

In January, a small, self-organized group of stakeholders convened in a closed-door meeting, where WILMAPCO representatives were invited to address stakeholder questions. In February, a second meeting involving the same group and elected officials took place, but WILMAPCO was not invited to participate.

Following this meeting, WILMAPCO received a letter from the newly elected state senator for the district asking that we stop further planning. This letter, which was also shared with the WILMAPCO Council last week. In response, WILMAPCO followed up with Senator Siegfried, clarifying that a fourth public workshop had already been announced and emphasizing that an ongoing public process could not be halted due to a private, closed-door meeting. The Council concurred with this stance, affirming that planning efforts should proceed as scheduled. Additional engagement efforts include an upcoming Advisory Committee meeting and a public workshop. The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for April 28th at the same community center as previous meetings. The fourth public workshop is tentatively set for May 14th or May 19th.

In parallel with these outreach efforts, WILMAPCO is conducting further assessments of the intersection at Philadelphia Pike and Governor Printz Boulevard. In January, discussions were held with representatives from The Waterfall, a prominent local event venue that hosts weddings, proms, and other large gatherings. With a maximum capacity of approximately 800 guests across its two ballrooms, it was essential to evaluate potential traffic impacts from one of their busiest events. As a result, WILMAPCO is re-running intersection analyses to explore options such as improved signal timing and assessing the feasibility of a proposed roundabout to avoid detrimental impacts on area businesses.

Following the Advisory Committee meeting and public workshop, WILMAPCO will make further revisions to the draft report. At this stage, it is unlikely that a single preferred transportation scenario will emerge due to the strong divergence of community opinions. Instead, the report will document all considered scenarios, outlining community concerns and detailing the pros and cons of each option. While no funding has been secured for implementation, some lower-cost improvements, such as modifications to traffic signal timing or enhanced repaving, may have greater community consensus. However, larger-scale projects will require continued community dialogue beyond the scope of this study. WILMAPCO plans to present the revised report to the TAC in June for a recommendation of adoption, with final approval anticipated at the July Council meeting.

8. Kirkwood Highway Corridor Land Use & Transportation Plan

Mr. Dave Gula presented the Kirkwood Highway Corridor Land Use and Transportation Plan, providing an update on the study's progress and outcomes. The presentation covered the results of the final two workshops, the recommendations that emerged, and the concluding steps in the project timeline.

The planning process has involved extensive collaboration with various partners and stakeholders, facilitating meaningful dialogue. The advisory committee played a significant role in this process, offering valuable insights and feedback. The final advisory committee meeting,

held in February, saw a strong turnout and productive discussions regarding the recommendations to be presented to the public.

A key component of the study involved mapping workshop attendees' places of residence, work, recreation, and education. This approach ensured comprehensive geographic representation across the corridor. The data presented from the November 21st workshop illustrated coverage trends and helped identify any gaps in participation.

With the completion of all workshops, the project is now in the process of finalizing the report. The next steps involve engaging the TAC and the WILMAPCO Council in reviewing the findings and determining implementation pathways. The study's vision emphasizes enhancing multimodal transportation options along the corridor. Certain areas pose significant challenges for non-motorized travel, given the high volume of transit users. The goal is to improve pedestrian and bicycle accessibility, facilitate safe connections to transit, and manage congestion effectively. Additionally, the plan seeks to transition sections of the corridor from an auto-oriented environment to a more balanced, multimodal corridor where appropriate.

Other key priorities include enhancing landscaping and open space, which has been identified as a crucial aspect for improving the corridor's aesthetic and environmental quality. Strengthening connections between neighborhoods, schools, parks, and other local resources is also a central objective, ensuring that residents can navigate the area safely and efficiently using various modes of transportation.

The final workshop, held in February, attracted over 100 attendees, culminating in a total engagement of 340 individuals across all five workshops. Additionally, four advisory committee meetings fostered strong participation from state and local elected officials. The November 21st workshop, where draft recommendations were presented, yielded largely positive feedback on proposed improvements in the areas of land use, economic development, roadway design, intersections, transit, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Mr. Gula shared that the study identified two primary community development areas: Prices Corner and Midway Shopping Center, both of which present opportunities for redevelopment. These areas were selected based on geographic suitability, accessibility, and market conditions that will likely lead to their redevelopment. The final report will prioritize Prices Corner due to recent development activity, including the addition of large retail establishments.

A primary focus of the study has been managing traffic speeds and enhancing safety. Kirkwood Highway features both Main Street-style sections, such as those in Elsmere and near Limestone Road, as well as high-speed roadway segments with fewer access points. The study proposes measures to discourage excessive speeds and improve overall safety.

One major recommendation includes the potential grade separation at the Limestone Road and Kirkwood Highway intersection, an area of significant congestion and pedestrian safety concerns. While such a project would be long-term, it could enhance traffic flow and pedestrian accessibility by simplifying signal phases and reducing conflicts.

Several key intersections have been studied for potential enhancements, including:

- **Limestone Road at Milltown Road** – A potential grade separation has been proposed to alleviate severe congestion.

- **Route 141 Interchange** – While not immediately slated for reconstruction, design concepts have been developed to improve future functionality and pedestrian safety. Short-term improvements have also been identified to enhance existing operations.
- **Churchman’s Road Extension** – If this project proceeds, additional lanes may be necessary on Kirkwood Highway to accommodate redirected traffic. Coordination with ongoing projects will be crucial.
- **Other Key Intersections** – Several intersections, including those at Route 2 and Route 100 and Green Valley Road, will undergo further Intersection Control Evaluations (ICE studies) to identify appropriate safety and operational improvements.

Mr. Gula shared other recommendations revealed public transit plays a critical role in the corridor, particularly Route 6, which is one of the State’s most successful transit lines. The study recommends preserving existing service levels while improving bus stop accessibility, safety, and connectivity. Consolidating entrances at key locations may also enhance pedestrian crossings and overall transit efficiency.

Additionally, the plan prioritizes improving pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods and commercial areas. Due to the corridor’s high traffic speeds, dedicated bike lanes are not recommended. Instead, the study suggests implementing buffered side paths and alternative routing through lower-stress roadways. Connections to existing trail systems, such as the planned Newport-to-Newark Trail, will also be explored.

The study further highlights the importance of creating safe, comfortable crossings for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly in areas where the corridor acts as a barrier between local destinations.

Mr. Gula explained that the study’s recommendations are categorized into short-term (1-6 years), medium-term, and long-term projects based on feasibility and funding availability. Short-term improvements may include:

- Enhancements to pedestrian crossings
- Intersection adjustments
- Transit stop improvements

Larger-scale projects, such as grade separations or major roadway redesigns, will require longer-term planning and funding commitments.

The final report will undergo review by the WILMAPCO TAC and the WILMAPCO Council for endorsement. The study’s outcomes will also inform the UPWP, ensuring that a monitoring program is established for Kirkwood Highway.

Since funding is not pre-allocated for these projects, multiple avenues will be explored, including:

- Coordination with DelDOT for maintenance and operational improvements
- Federal grants and alternative funding sources
- Integration into New Castle County’s Community Development guidelines
- Inclusion in the RTP to qualify for CTP/TIP funding

The monitoring program will help prioritize projects and track progress over time, ensuring that community needs continue to be addressed.

Mr. Gula emphasized that with the study nearing completion, the final report will provide a comprehensive roadmap for improving the Kirkwood Highway Corridor, addressing transportation, land use, safety, and connectivity challenges. Through continued collaboration

with stakeholders and funding agencies, the study's recommendations can be gradually implemented to create a more accessible, efficient, and vibrant corridor.

9. MD Route 272 Corridor Transportation Plan

Mr. Bill Swiatek provided an update on the ongoing Maryland Route 272 study. This project focuses on a section of North East, Maryland, extending beyond the town itself. A broad and diverse steering committee has been established, comprising representatives from the town, Cecil County, the Chamber of Commerce, local schools, law enforcement, the Yacht Club, and other stakeholders. The committee remains open to additional members who wish to participate in the planning process.

The study is currently transitioning from the visioning phase to the development of draft recommendations. The final component of the visioning phase involves youth outreach, which has taken longer than anticipated to initiate. However, engagement sessions with local teenagers will take place at the local library on March 25th. Additionally, preparations are underway for a second public workshop, which is expected to occur in April.

During the visioning phase, workshop participants were asked to identify their places of residence, and the same approach was applied to survey respondents. The first public workshop attracted approximately 41 participants, while the survey received 183 responses, demonstrating an effective expansion of outreach efforts through multiple engagement channels.

Geographically, outreach efforts have covered most of the corridor, but increased engagement is needed in certain central areas. To address this, targeted postcard mailings and a potential pop-up workshop are being considered to ensure broader community participation.

The survey divided the corridor into three areas to better analyze community concerns:

1. Survey Area A (North of Downtown, including U.S. Route 40 and Cecil College)

- Congestion: 86% of respondents identified congestion as a major issue, particularly near where Route 40 and I-95 intersect.
- Heavy Truck Traffic: 65% of respondents cited truck traffic as a concern.
- Tourist Traffic: 44% of respondents noted high traffic volumes due to visitors accessing nearby natural areas.
- Lack of Walking and Cycling Infrastructure: 41% of respondents highlighted gaps in pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.
- Additional Concerns: Written feedback indicated the need for more lanes, concerns over unsafe road conditions (blind turns and unclear turning movements), and complaints about poor traffic signal timing, which does not adjust based on traffic flow.

2. Survey Area B (Downtown North East, including Main Street and Maryland Avenue)

- Congestion: Tourist traffic was a major contributor to congestion.
- Parking Issues: Some respondents suggested that parallel parking may slow traffic, though survey responses also emphasized the importance of preserving existing parking.
- Traffic Flow Challenges: Additional concerns included traffic signal timing and congestion management.

3. Survey Area C (South of Downtown, transitioning into a rural environment)

- Speeding: 64% of respondents identified excessive speeding as a key issue.
- Tourist Traffic: 47% of respondents highlighted increased congestion due to tourism.

- Unsafe Passing: Respondents reported that some drivers engage in unsafe passing on road shoulders.
- Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety: The lack of infrastructure presents safety risks for non-motorized travelers.

In addition to the study's survey, the town's Comprehensive Plan update survey, which had 170 respondents, provided further insights into transportation priorities included:

- Walking and Biking Infrastructure: 70% of respondents indicated a need for improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities in their neighborhoods.
- Quality of Life Improvements: 56% of respondents identified better sidewalks and safer streets as the most significant factors for enhancing quality of life.

Mr. Swiatek emphasized that the study also examined connectivity issues:

- Walking: Key concerns included the need for better pedestrian connections between Northeast Isles and downtown, as well as improved walkability on Maryland Route 272 at U.S. Route 40.
- Cycling: Respondents emphasized the need for better bike connections between outlying neighborhoods and downtown, along with additional cycling lanes and off-road trails.
- Vehicular Travel: Suggestions included improving traffic flow through downtown, exploring bypass options, and creating additional entry points to Northeast Plaza to reduce congestion.
- Transit Services: Respondents supported improved transit connections between shopping areas, downtown, and tourist destinations, with potential enhancements to existing Cecil Transit services.

Mr. Swiatek explained the findings from the survey were reinforced by feedback gathered during the first public workshop. Attendees provided additional input on specific infrastructure improvements, such as:

- Adding left-turn lanes and widening shoulders in select areas
- Improving traffic signal synchronization to enhance flow
- Addressing congestion issues at key intersections

The project consultant, Wallace Montgomery, has been developing draft design concepts based on community feedback. An initial set of concepts was presented to the steering committee, which provided additional input and requested further refinements. A follow-up meeting with the committee is scheduled for later this week to review updated proposals. Pending approval, the refined concepts will be presented at the second public workshop and included in a second public survey to gather additional feedback.

The general framework for infrastructure improvements are:

- **Northern Corridor (Near Cecil College and U.S. Route 40):** Increasing road capacity to alleviate congestion, while also enhancing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to support anticipated development.
- **Downtown Area:** Implementing intersection redesigns to improve traffic flow and enhance safety for all users.
- **Southern Corridor (Rural Section South of Downtown):** Introducing traffic-calming measures to address speeding concerns.

In addition to long-term improvements, a set of short-term maintenance recommendations has been submitted to the MSHA, Cecil County, and the Town of North East. These recommendations focus on:

- Replacing missing or faded road signs and pavement markings
- Improving lighting at key locations
- Removing overgrown vegetation and abandoned roadside infrastructure
- Repairing damaged barriers

It is hoped that some of these maintenance issues will be addressed before the second public workshop, demonstrating progress on immediate concerns.

Mr. Swiatek concluded the presentation with next steps, mentioning the study is progressing toward the next phase of public engagement with a second Public Workshop & Survey. Draft concepts will be presented for community feedback. He added that further engagement sessions will be held with local youth at the North East Library. Based on feedback from the second round of outreach, final recommendations will be identified. The final report is expected to be presented to the Council in September. Additional project details and updates can be found at www.wilmapco.org/272.

INFORMATION ITEMS

10. Staff Report

Ms. Tigist Zegeye reported the following updates:

- Firstly, the Council met on March 13th, they reviewed 3 action items which included an amendment to the 2025-2028 TIP to include funding for the I-95 and SR-896 intersection. Another, TIP amendment for US-40 and SR-896 improvements and the approval of the 2025 NCC TAP project prioritization. Under presentations, the Council received updates on the UPWP outline, the Augustin Cut-Off Corridor Bike and Pedestrian Study, and the Claymont Area Master Plan.
- On February 20th, The Rocky Run Underpass Feasibility Study held its first public workshop, with 33 attendees.
- On February 20th, staff provided pedestrian safety instruction to approximately 40 students at Downes Elementary School during a Healthy Family Night event.
- On February 24th, the Kirkwood Highway Corridor Study held its final workshop, attended by 100 participants.
- On February 25th, the Maryland Route 272 Steering Committee met to discuss ongoing study progress, with the next meeting scheduled for March 20.
- On February 25th, staff participated in the Delaware MPO Roundtable with DelDOT in Dover.
- On February 26th, staff attended the Council on Transportation meeting.
- On February 26th, the Newport Transportation Study Monitoring Committee also convened additionally, JMT has been selected by DTC to complete the NEPA and PE work for the Newport Train Station project for the next 18-24 months.
- On March 3rd, the Augustin Cut-Off Reconfiguration Study held a workshop with 60 attendees. A survey was made available online for those unable to attend.
- On March 3rd, the Ardens Transportation Plan Monitoring Committee met, with their next meeting scheduled for April 7.
- On March 6th, the Churchman's Crossing Monitoring Committee held an office hour session, with an actual meeting held on March 19th.
- On March 10th, the Air Quality Partnership of Delaware held a meeting.
- On March 20th, the Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee convened.
- On March 20th, staff also participated in a webinar focused on public participation for the AMPO Core Product Interest Group.
- Staff will be attending the National Planning Conference at the end of this month.

- On April 3rd, staff will participate in the MASITE MPO Round Robin.
- On April 10th-11th, staff will host a pedestrian safety station at Downes Elementary School.
- On April 17th, staff will attend the Wilmington Earth Day event with TROPO.
- On April 21st, the East Elkton Plan Monitoring Committee will convene.

OTHER BUSINESS:

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

Attachments (0)