

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

April 17, 2025

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, April 17, 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:

Cooper Bowers, Delaware Department of Transportation
Taylor Englert, Department of Natural Resources and Environment
Michael Fortner, City of Newark
William Goldman, Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning
Dan Janousek, Maryland Department of Transportation
Quinn Krenzel, 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
Rose Zappacosta, Delaware Office of State Planning

TAC Ex-Officio Members present:

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
Maryland Department of Planning
Maryland State Highway Administration

TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:

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

Guests and Invitees:

Staff:

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner
Leonard Bonarek, Senior Planner
Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner, Emeritus
Sharen Elcock, Executive Assistant
Elizabeth Espinal, Administrative Assistant
Dave Gula, Principal Planner

Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner
Jake Thompson, Senior Planner
Dawn Voss, Outreach Coordinator

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Espinal.

3. MINUTES

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

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Michael Fortner and seconded by Mr. Matthew Rogers, the March 20, 2025, TAC Minutes are approved.

Motion Passed.

(04-17-25-01)

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

a) Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group

Mr. Dave Gula reported that the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group met on April 1. During the meeting, WILMAPCO's new principal planner was introduced. Mr. Gula delivered a presentation on the Kirkwood Highway Study, providing an overview of the project's progress to date. He also shared an update on the Augustine Cut-Off Study, which is currently in the middle of its planning process.

b) Air Quality Subcommittee

Mr. Bill Swiatek reported that the AQS met on April 3 to review several agenda items. The subcommittee examined a proposed amendment to the FY 2025–2028 TIP related to planning and design for the Belvidere Road improvements. The review concluded that the amendment did not require a revised conformity analysis. The AQS also reviewed the draft FY 2027–2030 TIP project list for New Castle County and determined that these projects likewise did not trigger a need for revised conformity analysis. In addition, the subcommittee reviewed and endorsed both the draft air quality technical scores and the draft CMAQ prioritization scores for the FY 2027–2030 TIP projects in New Castle County. Finally, the AQS received an update on the draft 2026 motor vehicle emissions budgets for ozone in New Castle County.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

ACTION ITEMS

6. To recommend adoption of the FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program.

Ms. Heather Dunigan reported on the UPWP, noting that the funding information remains the same as what was presented at the previous meeting. The funding is divided between the State of Delaware and the State of Maryland, with 80% provided by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. The local match is distributed among the State of Delaware, Cecil County, New Castle County, and the City of Wilmington. Ms. Dunigan reported that UPWP consists of planning tasks, totaling approximately \$4.4 million. A list of funded projects was presented, including all draft consultant-supported projects previously discussed. Pending TAC's recommendation for approval and the Council's formal adoption, and Federal approval, staff will begin to develop scopes of work and RFPs for all new tasks to ensure timely implementation.

Mr. Dan Janousek noted one technical correction: on page IV-42, the section under “coordination with MDOT” incorrectly lists his name. He clarified that it should read Shawn Kieran, whose name is already correctly listed earlier in the document as a TAC Committee member.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Matthew Rogers and seconded by Ms. Cathy Smith, TAC recommended the adoption of the UPWP local and state funding for Fiscal Year 2026.

Motion Passed.

(04-17-25-02)

7. To recommend Certifying the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process for FY 2026.

Ms. Heather Dunigan summarized WILMAPCO’s annual Self-Certification process, which, while only federally required every four years, is conducted annually to keep committee and Council members informed of MPO responsibilities. This year, the certification is presented as a standalone document since no TIP is being developed. It outlines federal requirements for MPOs, remains consistent with current law, and requires signatures from WILMAPCO and the Secretaries of Transportation from Maryland and Delaware.

To support the process, WILMAPCO has prepared a companion document detailing how these requirements are met, including links to major planning documents such as the MTP and UPWP. Ms. Dunigan emphasized WILMAPCO’s commitment to meeting federal requirements including monitoring for new guidelines based on Executive Orders.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Michael Fortner and seconded by Mr. Matthew Rogers, the TAC recommends the FY 2026 Self Certification for Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process.

Motion Passed.

(04-17-25-03)

8. To recommend approval of the Technical Scoring for Project Prioritization for FY 2027-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Mr. Jake Thompson reported that WILMAPCO has begun development of the FY 2027–2030 TIP. One of the initial steps in this process is to review the project list with partner agencies and update technical scores using the prioritization process approved by the WILMAPCO Council in 2020. It was noted that statewide and preservation projects are excluded from this prioritization.

Projects are scored based on several technical factors, including air quality reviewed by the Air Quality Subcommittee, environmental justice neighborhoods, safety which is based on crash frequency and severity, social determinants of health, and alignment with the Congestion Management System. Additional points are assigned for corridors with high traffic volumes and transit usage, mobility-challenged neighborhoods, pedestrian priority areas, freight bottlenecks, and support from local planning committees.

Projects are sorted by mode and technical score. While the Council may use these scores to rank projects, they also retain the discretion to apply other criteria. Mr. Thompson noted that some air quality scores had not yet been reviewed by the Air Quality Subcommittee; these were highlighted in yellow.

Mr. Thompson then reviewed several top-scoring projects by category:

- Bicycle and Pedestrian: US 13 (from US 40 to Memorial Drive) ranked highest with 34 points.
- Multimodal: US 13 southbound bus-bike right-turn lane ranked first with 27 points.
- Road Projects: US 40 and SR 896 grade-separated intersection ranked first with 12 points.
- Transit: Newark Regional Transportation Center was the highest ranked with 18 points.
- Other: A port area truck parking facility near Wilmington scored 8 points.

Mr. Thompson also referenced projects not currently included in the draft TIP, noting they are listed both for reference and as potential additions should additional funding become available.

Mr. Bill Swiatek confirmed that the Air Quality Subcommittee had reviewed and validated the technical scores previously shown in yellow. He also explained the separate CMAQ scoring process, which ranks projects based on emission reduction potential specifically PM2.5, NOx, and VOC's using national data from the FHWA CMAQ database. Projects are first ranked by project type effectiveness, followed by air quality score, and then overall technical score.

Top CMAQ-scoring projects include:

- The Port Area Truck Parking Facility (which includes idle reduction measures)
- Engine replacement initiatives
- Transit service expansions
- Park-and-ride facilities
- Roundabouts with transit amenities
- Numerous bicycle and pedestrian improvements

These rankings are submitted to DelDOT to guide funding decisions and ensure the most cost-effective air quality benefits.

Ms. Dunigan noted that if additional funding becomes available, staff recommends pulling projects from the unfunded list based on prioritization scores. Council would rank all projects, and if funds are limited, technical scores would guide which projects move forward or are deferred. If funding exceeds the constrained list, additional projects from the broader TIP aspirations list may be considered.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Dan Janousek and seconded by Mr. Michael Fortner, the Technical Scoring for project prioritization for the FY 2027-2030 TIP, are approved.

Motion Passed.

(04-17-25-04)

9. To recommend amendment of the FY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Mr. Jake Thompson reported that MDOT has requested an amendment to the FY 2025–2028 TIP to add funding for the Belvidere Road Improvements project. Although the project was adopted in May 2024 and is listed in the TIP, it is currently unfunded for these fiscal years.

The proposed amendment would add \$420,000 in right-of-way acquisition funding across FY 2025 through FY 2028. The justification for the amendment is based on projected traffic increases along Belvidere Road, which is expected to grow from 2,400 to 18,400 vehicles per day following the opening of the nearby I-95/Belvidere Road interchange. He noted that the project previously received \$1 million in planning and design funds in FY 2023, which was added through an amendment to the FY 2023–2026 TIP.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Michael Fortner and seconded by Mr. Matthew Rogers, the TAC recommends amending the FY 2025-2028 TIP.

Motion Passed.

(04-17-25-05)

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

10. First/Final Mile Freight Network Plan Update

Mr. Dan Blevins presented an update on the second iteration of the Final Mile Freight Network for New Castle County, building upon the original effort completed in 2021. This update responds to substantial shifts in freight activity patterns brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly increases in e-commerce, warehousing, and freight-intensive redevelopment. The updated network aims to improve understanding of the local roadway segments, often collectors and local roads that link freight-generating facilities to the regional and national freight systems.

The project integrates newer analytical tools, including origin-destination data, employment-based freight sector mapping, and stakeholder input, to identify and refine critical first/final mile freight corridors. The study introduces a tiered framework categorizing freight routes as major corridors, short but critical “stub” connections, and potential future links based on anticipated development. It also adopts a strategic approach focused on protecting freight access, managing land use conflicts, and accommodating multimodal use through planning and infrastructure improvements.

Ground validation, including windshield surveys, has been used to confirm data accuracy, while the study also evaluates pavement conditions, roadway markings, drainage, crash history, and congestion issues. The resulting GIS-based freight network will support prioritization for state and local planning efforts, particularly in identifying locations needing policy adjustments, maintenance, or capital investments.

To view the presentation in its entirety, [\[click here\]](#) (17m.18s.).

11. Rocky Run Underpass Feasibility Study

Mr. Dave Gula provided an update on the Rocky Run Underpass Feasibility Study, a project initiated as a recommendation of the 2020 Concord Pike Master Plan. The study seeks to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity across the highly car-centric Route 202 corridor, particularly between the dense residential areas to the east and the Brandywine Park system to the west, including First State National Park.

The presentation detailed the evaluation of an existing three-cell culvert carrying Rocky Run as a potential underpass for non-motorized users. Mr. Gula discussed the project's technical challenges and opportunities, including hydraulic analysis, ADA compliance, public feedback from a recent workshop, and coordination with key stakeholders such as DelDOT, Brandywine Conservancy, the University of Delaware Water Resources Center, Widener University, and the National Park Service.

Several alternatives were assessed, including retrofitting one cell of the culvert, constructing a new pedestrian bridge, and improving at-grade crossings. A modified design inspired by a similar project in Fayetteville, Arkansas; featuring partial walling within the culvert to balance pedestrian access and stormwater conveyance was found to be potentially feasible under both current and proposed hydraulic conditions.

The study also emphasizes the importance of trail connectivity to ensure the underpass serves as a meaningful link within the broader active transportation network. Coordination with adjacent property owners and trail planning partners continues as the project approaches the final reporting phase.

To view this presentation in its entirety, [\[click here\]](#) (18m. 02s.).

INFORMATION ITEMS

12. Staff Report

Ms. Heather Dunigan reported the following updates:

- On March 25th, staff participated in the Maryland Route 272 Corridor Plan.
- On March 26th, a pop-up event was held at the Northeast Library.
- On March 19th, staff had the opportunity to meet with the newly elected Mayor of Wilmington, Mayor John Carney.
- On March 28th to April 1st, staff attended the National American Planning Association (APA) Conference.
- On April 3rd, staff took part in the Salem Church Road Public Workshop.
- On April 9th, staff presented on the intersection of planning and community development during a session at the Mid-Atlantic Community Development Institute.
- On April 10th-11th, a safety station was hosted at Downes Elementary School.
- On April 15th, staff attended the New Jersey Transaction Conference.
- On April 16th, the Concord Pike Master Plan Monitoring Committee convened for its scheduled meeting.
- On April 17th, staff participated in the Wilmington Earth Day event in partnership with Tropo.
- On April 17th, the Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee also met.
- On April 21st, the East Elkton Plan Monitoring Committee held its meeting.
- On April 28th, the Claymont Area Master Plan Advisory Committee is scheduled to meet, followed by a final public workshop on May 14.
- On April 29th, a public workshop for the Maryland Route 272 Corridor Plan is scheduled.
- On May 5th, the Ardens Transportation Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On May 8th, both the Rocky Run Technical Committee and the Southbridge Truck Bypass Feasibility Study will commence.
- On May 12th, a public workshop for the Churchman's Crossing Plan is scheduled to be held.
- Ongoing collaborations continue between staff and DVRPC on the Regional Comprehensive Plan and the Climate Action Plan for the Philadelphia MSA.
- WILMAPCO has hired a new Senior Planner, Mr. Leonard Bonarek, has joined the team.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Bonarek introduced himself during the meeting, stating:

"Good morning, everybody. My name is Leonard. I've been on the job here for about three weeks, so the recurring joke is I'm still learning how to work the coffee machine and so forth. I come from the advocacy world, having worked at the Bicycle Coalition in Philadelphia for several years as a multimodal planner. That's the sort of work I'll be focusing on here as well. I'm still getting familiar with all our work across the region and asking a lot of questions."

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Attachments (0)