

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

May 15, 2025

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, May 15, 2025, at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, DE 19713 and via video conference/conference call.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Michael Fortner, from City of Newark, and TAC member, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

2. TAC Members present:

David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning
Michael Fortner, City of Newark
Gwinneth Kaminsky Rivera, City of Wilmington Planning
William Goldman, Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning
Shawn Kiernan, Maryland Department of Transportation
Tina Merrill, Department of Natural Resources and Environment
Quinn Krenzel, Town of Elkton Planning
Matthew Rogers, New Castle County Department of Land Use
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

TAC Ex-Officio Members present:

Jasmine Champion, U.S. Federal Highway Administration

TAC Members absent:

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

Pam Keeney, DNREC

Staff:

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner
Leonard Bonarek, Principal Planner
Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
Sharen Elcock, Executive 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 April 17, 2025, TAC Meeting Minutes.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Gwinneth Kaminsky Rivera and seconded by Mr. Matthew Rogers, the April 17, 2025, TAC Minutes are approved.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

None.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

6. Appointment of the Nominating Committee for TAC Chair

Mr. Michael Fortner explained that the TAC is seeking to form a nominating committee to manage the election of a new Chair. He clarified that, at this time, only a Chair is required, and inquired whether there was a need to also nominate a Co-Chair or Vice Chair. Ms. Heather Dunigan responded that both a Chair and Vice Chair are needed; Mr. Bower's is serving his second term and the vice chair position is currently vacant.

Mr. Fortner volunteered to serve on the nominating committee and requested two additional members. Mr. Matthew Rogers and Ms. Cathy Smith agreed to join the committee.

ACTION ITEMS

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

Mr. Jake Thompson reported that the MDOT has requested an amendment to the FY2025–FY2028 TIP to add construction funding for the Belvidere Road Bridge Replacement Project. Although this project was adopted in May 2024 and is listed in the TIP, it is currently unfunded for these fiscal years.

The proposed amendment would allocate \$24.988 million in construction funds. Mr. Thompson noted that the justification for this amendment is due to increased construction costs.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Shawn Kiernan and seconded by Ms. Cathy Smith, the TAC recommends amending the FY 2025-2028 TIP.

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

Mr. Jake Thompson reported that Cecil County has requested an amendment to the FY2025–FY2028 TIP to add a new project: the replacement of the Deaver Road Bridge over the CSX railroad. The proposed amendment includes \$11.49 million in funding, programmed from FY2025 through FY2027.

The justification for this new project is the deteriorating condition of the existing bridge, which is expected to worsen and could lead to weight restrictions or potential closure if not addressed. Due to its current narrow width, the bridge is classified as functionally obsolete. The new

structure will be designed to accommodate two 12-foot travel lanes and will aim to maximize shoulder widths to meet current design standards.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Cathy Smith and seconded by Mr. David Dahlstrom, the TAC recommends amending the FY 2025-2028 TIP.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

9. Rocky Run Underpass Feasibility Study

Mr. Dave Gula presented an update on the Rocky Run Pathway Underpass project, focusing on the construction feasibility and proposed recommendations for the pedestrian and bicycle underpass beneath U.S. Route 202. This presentation represents an opportunity for stakeholder input before seeking Council endorsement.

The project originated from prioritization by the Concord Monitoring Committee and has received strong support, including enthusiastic endorsement from the National Park Service. The underpass will utilize one cell of an existing three-cell culvert with modifications, including the addition of a mid-height flood wall in the southernmost cell. This wall is estimated to be between 4.5 and 5.5 feet and aims to allow major stormwater flow while minimizing frequent flooding, maintaining access for pedestrians and cyclists during smaller storm events.

The feasibility study includes hydraulic analysis in coordination with experts from RK&K and the University of Delaware Water Resources Center. Recommendations address trail connectivity on both the eastern and western sides of the underpass, integrating with existing and proposed trail networks, sidewalks, and adjacent properties including Widener University. Surface crossing improvements for Concord Pike /US-202 are also proposed to ensure safe access when the underpass is unusable due to high water levels.

Design considerations include lighting, signage, drainage modifications, and safety measures such as emergency access and public education signage. Although a continuous trail along Rocky Run is not proposed currently due to permitting complexities, it remains a long-term goal. Estimated project costs include \$500,000 for underpass modifications and additional costs for off-road trail connections. Alternatives such as a dedicated pedestrian tunnel or an overpass were considered but are deferred due to higher costs and community preference. Planning-level cost estimates for these alternatives will be shared at the final public workshop.

The next public engagement opportunity is scheduled for June 2 from 4:00 to 6:00 PM at the Talleyville Fire Hall. Following this, the final report will be completed, reviewed by the TAC in June, and presented to Council for potential endorsement.

To view this presentation in its entirety, [\[click here\]](#). [17m.16s.].

Following this presentation Ms. Gwinneth Kaminsky raised a question regarding the potential safety and security issues associated with the proposed Rocky Run underpass. She inquired whether community concerns had been voiced about possible misuse of space, such as loitering or unauthorized gatherings and whether any measures, such as lighting or surveillance, had been considered to address these risks.

In response, Mr. Dave Gula acknowledged that while no specific concerns have been raised by the residents in the local area or during public outreach, general considerations are valid. He noted that lighting is included in the design to enhance visibility and deter misuse. While in-

person monitoring by the National Park Service is unlikely, Mr. Gula emphasized the importance of integrating strong connections to the existing trail and sidewalk networks. These connections offer users the option to avoid the underpass entirely, ensuring alternative, safe surface-level crossings of Concord Pike.

Mr. Gula added that the feasibility study's purpose was to evaluate the project's viability, which it has confirmed. The final report will include a summary of public comments collected during the June 2 public workshop. This report will be reviewed by the TAC in their June meeting and submitted to the Council for potential endorsement in July. While overall public sentiment has been largely supportive with minimal opposition, the decision to move forward ultimately rests with the State, as it is a state-owned roadway. If endorsed by Council, the project would become eligible for future CTP/TIP funding.

10. Strategic Action Plan

Mr. Dan Blevins introduced a unique initiative under WILMAPCO's UPWP focused on strengthening the integration between Land-Use and Transportation Planning in New Castle County. Prompted by the recent adoption of the NCC 2050 Comprehensive Plan, this Strategic Action Plan aims to improve coordination between the County's development approval process and DelDOT's transportation project planning.

The plan includes three core objectives:

1. Right sizing the development review process to make it more efficient and equitable.
2. Facilitating private sector contributions to transportation planned projects.
3. Enhancing interagency coordination between the County and DelDOT.

Mr. Blevins further explained that efforts of communication involved stakeholder interviews that were conducted with County Council members, developers, traffic engineers, and legal professionals. The feedback revealed four key thematic priorities, termed the "Four Ps":

- Proportionality: Ensuring development fees are fairly shared, rather than burdening the last developer in.
- Predictability: Improving clarity in costs and expectations to maintain developer confidence.
- Practicality: Modernizing impact measurement tools to reflect real-world development scenarios.
- Programming: Streamlining how developer commitments are integrated into broader planning frameworks like RTP and TIP.

The plan also draws upon lessons from WILMAPCO's subarea studies and national best practices. A significant outcome will be a recommendation-oriented report that emphasizes case studies, real-world examples, and implementation strategies. An appendix, referred to as the "parking lot," will store additional innovative or long-term ideas not yet ready for implementation.

Recommendations will be grouped into three main categories:

- Adequacy and Concurrency: Reforming how TIS are scoped and how data is used to assess development impact.
- Implementation Clarity: Enhancing transparency around responsibility, project tracking, and integration with existing plans like the RTP.
- Process and Staff Management: Evaluating staffing and coordination structures within DelDOT and the County, including updates to the use and management of TIDs and emerging planning tools like CCDs.

A notable case study cited involves shifting from isolated intersection-level analysis to corridor-wide or arterial segment-level assessments, an approach already used in projects like the Churchman's Crossing Study.

While many of the recommendations require County Council review and longer-term adoption, the plan positions itself as a foundational guide for the County's next plan refinement cycle in 2027. A complete draft of the Strategic Action Plan is expected shortly after Memorial Day, with a final version anticipated for endorsement by the TAC in June and Council review in July.

To view the presentation in its entirety, [\[click here\]](#) (10m.51s.).

11. MD Route 272 Corridor Transportation Plan

Mr. Bill Swiatek provided an update on the Maryland Route 272 Corridor Plan during the meeting. The study is currently just past its halfway point and is guided by a diverse steering committee, including representatives from local governments, advocacy groups, MDOT, local police, and tourism departments. The plan covers a three-mile stretch of MD 272 from Cecil College to south of North East, Maryland, with a focus on improving safety, multimodal access, and traffic operations.

The study began with an existing conditions report and has progressed through public visioning, outreach workshops, and surveys. The current phase involves presenting and refining draft concepts and recommendations. Major proposals include consistent lane configurations, shared-use pathways to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, traffic calming features such as roundabouts, and reconfigurations of major intersections in and around downtown North East.

A strong emphasis has been placed on addressing tourist-related congestion, speeding, truck traffic, and lack of pedestrian infrastructure. Three roundabouts are proposed to improve circulation and safety: one at Russell Street, another at Irishtown Road, and a third at Shady Beach Road. Additional proposals include lane reductions and re-striping, sidewalk and bike lane enhancements, and a possible two-way conversion of Mauldin Avenue.

Public engagement has been robust, with well-attended workshops and ongoing efforts to gather feedback through surveys, youth outreach, and targeted downtown business and resident engagement. The team is also planning a third public workshop to present preferred alternatives and finalize the recommendations. A monitoring committee will be established to carry the effort forward post-plan, especially for exploring items that were beyond the scope of the current study.

To view the presentation in its entirety, [\[click here\]](#) (14m.14s.).

Following this presentation, Mr. David Dahlstrom inquired about the posted speed limit in downtown North East and whether there were any plans to lower it. Mr. Bill Swiatek responded that the current speed limit is 25 - 30 mph and that there are no recommendations to reduce it further.

Mr. Dahlstrom also asked whether MDOT's Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) manual had been used in developing the corridor plan. Mr. Swiatek noted that, while he could not confirm whether the consultants specifically used the manual, he believes the recommendations align well with context-sensitive principles, particularly given the town's growth and evolving infrastructure needs and MDOT's support of the effort on the Steering Committees.

INFORMATION ITEMS

12. Staff Report

Ms. Tigist Zegeye reported the following updates:

- On April 16th, the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee met and received a presentation on the Rocky Run Underpass Feasibility Study.
- On May 1st, the Council held its monthly meeting. John Sisson was re-elected as Chair, and Stephen O'Connor was elected as Vice Chair for another term. Several action items were approved, including adoption of the state and local cash commitments for the FY2026 UPWP, approval of the FY2026 UPWP, Self-Certification of the MPO Process for FY2026, approval of project prioritization for the FY2027–2030 TIP and amending the FY2025–2028 TIP for the Belvidere Road Improvement Project. Additionally, three presentations were delivered: Rocky Run Feasibility Study, First/Final Mile Freight Network Plan Update and Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan.
- On May 8th, Staff gave a presentation on the Delaware Avenue Bikeway and the Newark Regional Transportation Center Project to the Mid-Atlantic ITE University of Delaware Student Chapter.
- On May 14th, a public workshop for the Claymont Area Master Plan was held.
- On May 19th, the Maryland Route 272 Corridor Plan Steering Committee is scheduled to meet.
- On May 20th, the annual public workshop for the Churchman's Crossing Area will be held.
- On May 22nd, Staff will participate in Bike to School Day and a Bike Rodeo at Downes Elementary School.
- On May 22nd, a public workshop will be held for the Newark Bicycle Plan.
- On May 31st, Staff will present the Southbridge Truck Bypass Study at a community event at Open Streets on New Castle Avenue.
- On June 4th, a public workshop will be held for the Arden Transportation Plan.
- On June 10th, a second public workshop will be held for the Augustine Cut-Off Multimodal Study.
- On June 12th, a workshop will be held for the Newport Transportation Plan Monitoring Committee.
- On June 18th, an open house workshop will be hosted for the Wilmington Initiatives.
- On June 26th, the Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On July 28th, the East Elkton Monitoring Committee will hold its next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Ms. Cathy Smith announced that DART's May 2025 service changes will take effect on Sunday, May 18. Additionally, the Resort Beach Bus service will begin on Monday, May 19. She indicated that a summary of the approved changes would be posted in the meeting chat for reference. Ms. Smith added that most of the changes involve minor schedule adjustments, including the removal of some early morning trips and the addition of evening service on Routes 2 and 61. Other changes include adjustments to running times to improve OTP. Notably, modifications to Route 20 are intended to better coordinate with the schedule of the James Grove Adult School and improve service for employees working in the Greenville area.

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Attachments (0)