

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

September 18, 2025

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, September 18, 2025, at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, DE 19713 and via video conference/conference call.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Cathy Smith, from DTC (Delaware Transit Corporation), and TAC Vice-Chair, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

2. TAC Members present:

Stephen Bayer, Delaware Department of Transportation
Samantha Bulkilvish, Delaware Office of State Planning
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning
Michael Fortner, City of Newark
Julianne Hilton, Maryland Department of the Environment
Gwinneth Kaminsky Rivera, City of Wilmington Planning
Shawn Kiernan, Maryland Department of Transportation
Tina Merrill, Department of Natural Resources and Environment
Matthew Rogers, New Castle County Department of Land Use
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

TAC Ex-Officio Members present:

Gregory Beacoat, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

TAC Members absent:

Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning
City of Wilmington Department of Public Works
Maryland State Highway Administration
Town of Elkton Planning

TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:

Amtrak
Delaware Division of Small Business, Development, and Tourism
Delaware River and Bay Authority
Diamond State Port Corporation
U.S. Federal Transit Administration

Guests and Invitees:

Nicolas Baker, WSP Lead Planner
Jane Dilley, League of Women Voters
David Edgell, Office of State Planning
Austin Gray, Delaware Department of Transportation
Pamela Keeney, DNREC
Colton Philips, Delaware Department of Transportation
Alexadra Brun, Maryland Department of Transportation

Staff:

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner
Leonard Bonarek, Senior Planner

Sharen Elcock, Executive Assistant
Elizabeth Espinal, Administrative Assistant
Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Dawn Stant, Outreach Coordinator
Colleen Stroud, Transportation Planner
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner
Jacob Thompson, Senior Planner
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Espinal.

3. MINUTES

Approval of August 21, 2025, TAC Meeting Minutes.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Matthew Rogers and seconded by Mr. Shawn Kieran, August 21, 2025, TAC Minutes are approved.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

a. Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group: Mr. Dave Gula reported that a meeting was held via Zoom on Tuesday, August 5. The agenda included two presentation and discussion items: the 2025 Mobility Opportunities Plan, presented by staff member Bill Swiatek, and the Connectivity Analysis Report, presented by staff member Jake Thompson. Mr. Gula noted that the meeting was brief with limited discussion.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

ACTION ITEMS

None.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

6. Strategies for State Policies and Spending Update

Ms. Samantha Bulkilvish, from the Office of State Planning Coordination, provided an update on the 2025 State Strategies. She explained that the strategies are updated every five years, serve to coordinate state infrastructure and service investments with local land use decisions. This alignment helps prevent waste and inefficiency while supporting efficient development, farmland and open space preservation, and communication with local governments. The update process is mandated under Delaware Code Title 29, Chapter 91.

The 2025 update incorporates new spatial data, growth areas from amended local comprehensive plans, and revised state agency implementation policies. In addition to mapping, the update includes a policy guide. Data collection began in May, with interagency coordination and public outreach following in June through the release of a “story map” explaining the data layers used. A draft strategies map was prepared in July and reviewed in August. On September 8, the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues approved release of the draft, which was made available for a 30-day public comment period beginning September 10 and ending October 10, 2025, to comment or view the map visit the [website](#).

The draft strategies categorize Delaware into investment levels:

- Level 1 (red): urban centers and municipalities where redevelopment and infill are encouraged.
- Level 2 (orange): high-growth suburban areas near Level 1, where auto-dependence is greater but higher-density growth is supported.
- Level 3 (yellow): transitional areas between urban and rural zones, recognized for possible long-term growth but lower near-term investment.
- Level 4 (green): rural areas with agriculture and natural resources where preservation is emphasized, and new private development is discouraged.
- Out-of-Play Areas/Level 5: lands legally protected or restricted, such as state forests, wildlife refuges, and public parks.

Ms. Bulkilvish emphasized the Cabinet Committee's guiding statement on state priorities, with "smart growth" as the central theme. Supporting goals include efficient spending, affordable housing, climate resiliency, land conservation, and economic development. Updated policy documents now feature streamlined one-page summaries, policy tables by agency, and clearer guidance for interpreting investment levels at the parcel scale.

Ms. Bulkilvish also highlighted methodological improvements, including the use of vector rather than raster analysis for greater accuracy, consolidation of agricultural and forestland datasets, updated hospital and EMS facility data, and the addition of "areas of opportunity" from the State Housing Authority. A story map was created to improve transparency about data layers and their role in analysis.

Ms. Bulkilvish noted that comprehensive plan updates or annexations adopted within the next five years will be deemed compliant with the strategies until the next scheduled update. She further explained that although strategies guide growth and preservation priorities, infrastructure investments may occasionally be necessary in Levels 3, 4, or Out-of-Play areas for health, safety, or welfare purposes.

Ms. Bulkilvish concluded by reviewing the timeline. Following public comments and regional workshops in September in Kent, New Castle, and Sussex Counties, staff will compile feedback in October and present final revisions to the Cabinet Committee in November. The Governor is expected to adopt the 2025 State Strategies by executive order in December, with implementation beginning in 2026.

To view this presentation in its entirety, [click here](#). [(21min. 33sec.)]

Ms. Cathy Smith thanked Ms. Bulkilvish for her presentation, noting that the chart and policy format were efficient, user-friendly, and easy to follow. She inquired whether the DART had its own policy section or if it was included under DelDOT's.

Ms. Samantha Bulkilvish responded that she would need to verify the information in the policy document. She offered to follow up by sharing details on the chat or offline. She later confirmed that DART data is included under DelDOT and shared the relevant link in the chat. Ms. Bulkilvish also expressed appreciation for the participation of agency partners in the update process, noting the value of their perspectives and contributions.

7. DART Fall 2025 Service Change

Ms. Cathy Smith presented an overview of the agency's proposed service changes, emphasizing DART's mission to provide safe, reliable, and environmentally sustainable transit across the state. She noted that five public hearing workshops were scheduled to gather feedback, with recent sessions held in Wilmington, Bear, Georgetown, and Lewes, and a final session planned for Dover. Attendance varied, with the Lewes workshop drawing the highest participation due to its location at the transit hub, though acoustics posed challenges.

Ms. Smith explained that the proposals are part of DART Reimagined Phase II, which seeks to "right-size" services to align with current travel demand, budget realities, and evolving work patterns. She reported that ridership remains below pre-COVID levels, particularly among commuters, and highlighted that service reductions will focus on early morning and late-night trips with consistently low ridership. Proposed changes in New Castle County include adjustments to Routes 2, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, 28, 35, 40, 46, 51, 54, and 64, with several route deviations eliminated, frequencies reduced, or services consolidated. While some concerns were raised, particularly regarding the splitting of Route 13 and elimination of Route 54. Ms. Smith emphasized that alternatives remain available through other routes and modified service patterns.

Ms. Smith added that some cost-saving measures include discontinuing support for privately owned park-and-ride lots, which will remain accessible to riders but no longer officially maintained by DART. Reallocated resources will be directed toward enhancing weekend service, especially on Sundays, to better match Saturday service levels.

Ms. Smith concluded by reviewing the timeline; she shared that public comments are due by September 24, with staff review scheduled for October 3, final approvals by October 9, and implementation of service changes on November 16, 2025. She also shared ridership trends, noting paratransit recovery at 90% of pre-pandemic levels, fixed-route ridership at 78%, and SEPTA services at 55%. Finally, Ms. Smith highlighted improvements to the DART mobile app, which now consolidates trip planning, fare payment, and microtransit booking functions.

To view this presentation in its entirety, [click here](#). [(23min. 07sec.)]

Mr. Dave Gula asked whether DART had considered adding bus stops directly along Delaware Park Drive for Route 5, noting that ridership at the Churchman's Station stop is relatively low and that avoiding the detour into the station could save time. He also mentioned the presence of a connected sidewalk that could support such a change.

Ms. Cathy Smith responded that the idea had been considered and strongly encouraged Mr. Gula to submit a formal comment. She emphasized the importance of receiving public input on such proposals to help support service adjustments.

8. New Castle Avenue Walkability Workshop Update

Mr. Leonard Bonarek reported on the Walkable Community Workshop held on August 6 in the City of New Castle. The event began with a seminar at the New Castle Public Library, where staff provided an overview of planning tools and the benefits of walkability, including safety, health, affordability, and accessibility. Participants also discussed concepts such as complete streets, universal design, and traffic calming strategies.

Following the seminar, participants were divided into two groups for a walking audit of key areas in New Castle. The participants identified challenges such as uneven brick sidewalks, wide

intersections, faded crosswalks, accessibility issues, and high vehicle speeds on Route 9. They also noted positive examples, including ADA improvements integrated into historic streetscapes.

Feedback from participants emphasized three main priorities: intersection improvements, sidewalk upgrades, and traffic calming measures; particularly curb bump-outs. Additional suggestions included enhancing crosswalk visibility, addressing speeding concerns, providing resources for maintaining brick sidewalks, and improving pedestrian connections to Battery Park and the Jack Markell Trail. A draft report synthesizing these findings is under review by the City of New Castle, with final revisions pending.

To view this presentation in its entirety, [\[click here\]](#). [(13min. 28sec.)]

Ms. Cathy Smith commended Mr. Bonarek on an excellent presentation and shared her affection for the city of New Castle, where she interned during graduate school. She noted the common difficulty of such projects, remarking that fieldwork often involves a million problems.

Mr. Bonarek found the work satisfying because the extensive needs means "anything will be an improvement." He highlighted that New Castle is unique due to an established foundation of walkability. While acknowledging it's not universally accessible, he praised it as "really, really great" for a reasonably fit person. Mr. Bonarek concluded that the city's beauty, numerous destinations, and density supporting thriving businesses provide a lot to work with.

INFORMATION ITEMS

9. Staff Report

Mr. Dave Gula has provided the following updates on staff activities since the last TAC meeting:

- On July 28th, the East Elkton Plan's Monitoring Committee met.
- On August 4th, Staff attended the AMPO/AASHTO Peer Exchange in Minnesota.
- On August 4th, Staff attended the United Neighbors meeting, Wilmington.
- On August 8th, WILMAPCO held interviews for the SNCC Growth Area LUTP: JMT was selected.
- On August 11th, Staff attended the Cecil County Transit Coordination meeting.
- On August 12th, the final public workshop for the Augustine Cut Off Multimodal Improvements Study, Phase 2, was held on August 12th with about 35 people attending.
- On August 16th, Staff participated in the Open Streets Wilmington - N. Market Street event.
- On August 21st, the Route 9 Master Plan's Monitoring Committee met: next meeting scheduled for September 18.
- On August 27th, Staff will present the MD-272 Plan to the Town of North East's Mayor and Commissioners.
- On August 29, WILMAPCO received 10 proposals for the RFP submitted for the Safety Action Plan for the City of Wilmington. Interviews to be scheduled for the end of September.
- On September 4th, the Final AC meeting (#4) was held virtually for ACO with 18 attendees.
- On September 8th, the Ardens Monitoring Committee met.
- On September 10th, the kickoff meeting was held for the SNCC LUTP update.
- On September 13th, Staff participated in the Hispanic Heritage Health Event at the Route 9 Library.
- On September 18th, the Newark Bicycle Committee will meet.

- On September 21st, Staff will participate in Newark Community Day.
- On September 24th, the Strategies for State Policies and Spending are being released and a public workshop for NCC is scheduled at the Route 9 Innovation Center in New Castle City.
- On September 25th, Staff will participate in the 2025 Delaware Highway Safety Summit.
- On September 29th, a joint DelDOT CTP/WILMAPCO TIP Public Hearing will be held at STAR Campus in the ATRIUM lobby.
- On October 8th, staff will attend the Downes Walk to School Day and the Windy Hills Walkable Community Workshop Presentation.
- On October 9th, the Windy Hills Walkable Community Workshop walkabout and mapping will occur.
- On October 16th, the next TAC meeting will be held in person at Lums Pond State Park Area 4 for WILMAPCO's annual picnic.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Shawn Kiernan reminded everyone that a CTP transportation pre-tour meeting will be held virtually on September 24 at 10:00 a.m. He added that the Cecil County tour meeting is scheduled for November 5 at 10:00 a.m., in person, with a possible virtual option. Mr. Kiernan will share the link to the meeting via WILMAPCO staff.

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

Attachments (0)