

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 14, 2024

The WILMAPCO Council meeting was held at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, DE 19713 and virtually via Zoom.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. John Sisson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Members present:

John Sisson, representing Delaware Transit Corporation
Tyson Byrne representing Heather Murphy, Maryland Governor's Appointee
David Edgell, Office of State Planning and Delaware Governor's Appointee
Stephen O'Connor, representing Cecil County Executive, Danielle Hornberger
Charuni Patibanda, representing New Castle County Executive, Matthew Meyer
Pam Steinebach, representing DelDOT Secretary of Transportation, Nicole Majeski

Members absent:

Eric Thompson, Mayor of Elsmere, representing New Castle County Municipalities
Timothy Lucas, representing City of Wilmington Mayor, Michael S. Purzycki
Charlestown Commissioner, Cecil County Municipalities

Guests, Observers:

Samantha Bulkivish, TAC member
Jasmine Champion, Federal Highway Administration
Amanda Giuttari, DelDOT
Robin Hicks, Public
Jacob Higgins, City of Newark
Tara Hofferth, Kittleson
Dan Janousek, MDOT
Mike Kaszyski, PAC Chair
Keyleigh Kern
Camilla Kumar, DelDOT Leadership Academy
Teresa Lord, Public
Anthony Nobile, JMT Consultants
Malasia Reid, DTC
Stefan Rutowicz, City of Newark
Marilyn Smith, Dover/Kent MPO

Staff members:

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

Minutes prepared by Elizabeth Espinal.

3. MINUTES:

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Tyson Byrne seconded by Mr. David Edgell the Council approved the January 11th, 2024, Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion passed.

(03-14-24-01)

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

None.

COUNCIL MEMBERS' AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

5. Chairperson's Report:

Mr. John Sisson reported that the Nominating Committee Members for the FY 2024-2025 officers have been finalized, with the following candidates selected: Heather Murphy from MDOT, Pamela Steinbach from DeIDOT, and David Edgell from the Office of State Planning. Additionally, Ms. Heather Murphy has agreed to chair the committee.

Furthermore, Mr. Sisson announced that the final report for DART Reimagined has been completed, and a briefing is scheduled for the first week of April, followed by a public and legislators' workshop at a later date. The service change for May has also been approved, marking the culmination of years of effort, which has generated considerable excitement among the team.

Additionally, Mr. Sisson noted significant progress on the downtown Wilmington corridor project, particularly in the installation of bus shelters, which has garnered positive feedback. This project is anticipated to enhance operations in downtown Wilmington and improve the services provided to the public.

Council Member's Reports:

Mr. David Edgell introduced a new member, Ms. Samantha Bulkilvish, Principal Planner at the Office of State Planning Coordination of Delaware, who will serve as the liaison to New Castle County. Ms. Bulkilvish will also represent the organization in WILMAPCO's Technical Advisory Committee and in all matters concerning New Castle County.

Mr. Tyson Byrne mentioned that Mr. Rashad Pinkney has resigned from MDOT. Temporarily assuming his responsibilities as a TAC member is Mr. Dan Janousek. Mr. Byrne also announced the appointment of Mr. Geoff Anderson as the new Chief Regional Executive Director at MDOT, filling a position above Heather Murphy.

Ms. Pamela Steinbach reported that the Council on Transportation approved the FY 2025 CTP during the meeting on February 22nd, and it has since been recommended to the Governor for approval. Ms. Steinbach expressed gratitude to all members who participated in the process.

6. Executive Director's Report – Ms. Tigist Zegeye shared the following information:

- On February 21st Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan Scenario Workshop was held at the Cranston Heights Fire Company Hall with about 68 attendees
- On February 22nd staff participated in the Council on Transportation Meeting.

- On February 22nd staff provided pedestrian safety instruction at Downes Elementary School during their Family Night, with about 30 students participating.
- On February 26th and on March 1st staff attended Downes Elementary safety week and participated in a safety station for 1st and 2nd grade a combined 111 students participating.
- On February 26th staff attended the kickoff for the DE State Rail Plan.
- On February 28th the Churchman's Crossing Monitoring Committee met for their winter meeting. Both Churchman's Crossing and Concord Pike's newsletter are available on our project websites.
- On February 29th the Claymont Area Master Plan Visioning Workshop was held at Archmere Academy's Patio with about 50 attendees.
- On March 5th the Ardens Monitoring Committee held a meeting; the next meeting is scheduled for April 1st.
- On March 14th the East Elkton Steering Committee met and the second public workshop is scheduled for March 27 at 6PM in the Elkton Library.
- On March 21st the Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee is set to meet.
- On March 28th the Claymont Planning Partners will host a Planning Charrette.
- Staff will be attending the American Planning Association's National Planning Conference in April.
- On April 16th staff will be hosting the TIP/CTP Public Workshop at WILMAPCO along with DeIDOT.
- On April 17th staff will be participating in the Delaware Safety Summit.
- On April 18th staff will be presenting at the Delaware Equity Summit.
- The February budget was provided during this meeting, and it was noted that 61% of the budget has been utilized. We have about four months left until the end of the fiscal year and are waiting for consultants to submit their invoices.
- On a positive note, we have the FY26 Audit report available and are happy to report that there are no findings of our financial statements or federal awards and no negative findings from our last fiscal year. Once the report is finalized it will be made available to members of the Council, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration.
- WILMAPCO has been awarded \$240,000 under the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program for reducing truck traffic in the Southbridge Neighborhood. In addition, DeIDOT has also received \$2 million from the same grant program for the Bridging I-95 Concept Study: Connecting Wilmington's Communities. You may recall that WILMAPCO helped put together the feasibility study for the I-95 CAP.

7. Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Report:

Mr. Mike Kaszyski shared that the PAC convened on Monday, February 12, 2024, which featured a slight schedule adjustment due to the President's Day holiday falling on the third Monday of the month. Despite this, a productive session ensued with a quorum of 10 members, with 4 attending in person and the others joining virtually via Zoom.

The meeting commenced with a staff report delivered by Ms. Heather Dunigan, during which inquiries and clarifications regarding upcoming meetings and events were addressed. Following this, three presentations were made, each sparking lively discussions among PAC members.

First, Aviva Klugh from MDOT presented the Maryland State report on transportation, offering valuable insights into regional transportation trends and developments. This was followed by Mr. Jake Thompson of WILMAPCO, who shared the 2024 Inter-Regional Report, providing a comprehensive overview of inter-regional transportation initiatives. PAC members engaged in

discussions regarding population change and job growth in different parts of the inter-regional study area, and how these factors will affect travel patterns.

The final presentation was given by Mr. Bill Swiatek on the Regional Priority Climate Action Plan, which generated significant interest among PAC members. This led to in-depth discussions and inquiries into various aspects of climate action, including Delaware's stance on electric vehicle adoption, the disclosure of natural gas and chemical usage, and support programs for national infrastructure projects. Additionally, there were discussions on adopting more environmentally friendly land uses to promote multimodal travel and mobility options.

8. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Report:

Ms. Heather Dunigan provided a summary of the previous TAC meetings held in conjunction with the Air Quality Subcommittee. The January 18th TAC meeting included a review of a TIP amendment from DelDOT and DART to allocate funding for installing transit vehicle air filtration systems, which was recommended for approval. Presentations were delivered by MDOT and DelDOT on greenhouse gas emissions targets, along with an update on the Philadelphia MSA Regional Climate Action Plan and the draft Interregional Report.

During the February 15th meeting, a series of TIP amendments requested by DelDOT were discussed and recommended for approval. These included US13 pedestrian improvements from the South College Ave. gateway, the SR. 9 River Rd., the Tyler McConnell Bridge, and train air filtration. The Air Quality Subcommittee found that the amendments do not trigger a new conformity analysis. Presentations were also given on Maryland greenhouse gas emissions targets, the Regional Climate Action Plan, and a review of the Transportation Improvement Program. Additionally, during the February meeting, discussions were held with TAC regarding the timeline for bringing items for public comment to the Council and the TAC. Due to being behind schedule, it was decided to defer the vote for public comment release. TAC members expressed satisfaction with this decision, aligning with the outcome of the vote in Council.

ACTION ITEMS:

9. To Amend the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Ms. Heather Dunigan that DelDOT has requested a TIP amendment to fund installing air filtration systems on DART buses. DelDOT conducted tests and found that these systems improved indoor air quality, which was proven particularly during wildfires experienced a year ago. The proposed amendment allocates \$1.2 million for this initiative. Ms. Charuni Patibanda commended DelDOT for their initiative and expressed gratitude for prioritizing clean air and safe travel for individuals with medical conditions and vulnerable populations who rely on buses for transportation.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Charuni Patibanda and seconded by Mr. David Edgell the Council approved the TIP amendment.

Motion passed.

(03-14-24-02)

10. To Amend the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Heather Dunigan informed the attendees that DelDOT has requested an amendment to the TIP to incorporate revised funding for US13—US40 to Memorial Drive Pedestrian Improvements. She highlighted that the proposed changes involve a slight decrease in funding

and a shifting back of construction funding from the FY23 to FY25 to the FY25 to FY26 time period.

Ms. Charuni Patibanda raised a question about the start date for the project under consideration. Ms. Dunigan responded that she was not aware of an exact start date and indicated that such information typically becomes available closer to the project's actual initiation. She acknowledged the importance of clarifying this detail for future reference. Ms. Charuni expressed appreciation for the response, mentioning that her inquiries about the TIPs often revolve around timelines and scheduling, and thanked Ms. Dunigan for the information provided.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Pamela Steinbach and seconded by Ms. Charuni Patibanda the Council approved the TIP amendment.

Motion passed.

(03-14-24-03)

11. To amend the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Heather Dunigan mentioned that DeIDOT has requested an amendment to the TIP to include revised funding for the S. College Avenue Gateway project. This entails a slight decrease in funding due to the shifting of right-of-way funds. Additional analysis by consultants is required before the concluded PE so deferring right-of-way funds allows adequate time for this analysis to take place. Mr. John Sisson, as a DeIDOT representative, added that the focus is on ensuring the accuracy of the total scope of the project. The intention is not to estimate right-of-way needs prematurely but to align them with the scope of the projects.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Pamela Steinbach and seconded by Ms. Charuni Patibanda the Council approved the TIP amendment.

Motion passed.

(03-14-24-04)

12. To amend the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Heather Dunigan stated that DeIDOT had requested an amendment to include revised funding for SR9, River Road Area Improvements, and Flood Remediations in the TIP. She highlighted that this amendment involved pushing back funds, leading to a decrease in funding levels. Specifically, this decrease was due to deferring Preliminary Engineering (PE) Funds and delaying right-of-way funds in the TIP.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. David Edgell and seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinbach the Council approved the TIP amendment.

Motion passed.

(03-14-24-05)

13. To amend the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Heather Dunigan mentioned that DeIDOT requested that the TIP be amended to include revised funding for the Tyler McConnell Bridge- SR141 Montchanin Road and to Alapocas Road.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. David Edgell and seconded by Ms. Pamela Steinbach the Council approved the TIP amendment.

Motion passed.

(03-14-24-06)

14. To Release the Draft FY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Public Comment

Ms. Heather Dunigan provided an overview of the proposed changes in the FY 2025-2028 TIP compared with the FY 2023-2026 TIP. Ms. Dunigan outlined the plan to release the proposed changes for public comment from March 18th to May 6th, with a public workshop scheduled for April 16th. Ms. Dunigan emphasized the importance of focusing on project details rather than funding discussions during the workshop.

In terms of funding allocation, Ms. Dunigan noted that most funds are allocated to multimodal projects, aligning with the complete streets policy. There has been a decrease in funding for roadway only projects compared to previous years due to the completion of major highway projects.

Regarding funding by category, preservation funds constitute the largest share, followed by a decrease in expansion projects due to the completion of major highway projects. The statewide element of the TIP receives the largest share of funding at 71%, with an increase compared to previous years. Ms. Dunigan also discussed the breakdown of funding by county, highlighting Newcastle County of a 25% significant share compared to Cecil County 4% smaller allocation. In terms of funding sources, federal funding now constitutes the largest share at 50%, surpassing state funding of 48%. Ms. Dunigan mentioned ongoing efforts to better document other funding sources, such as developer-driven projects.

Finally, Ms. Dunigan provided an overview of new projects, including the Diamond State Rail study, intersection conversions to roundabouts, and the Hares Corner Pointer Interchange project. She highlighted the importance of project development funding for long-term infrastructure projects including three intersections that are slated for conversion into roundabouts as part of the intensity projects: Bear Road, Reybold Drive, Bunker Hill Rd at Sand Hill Drive, and St. Annes Church Road at SR71. Additionally, the Governor Printz Project, which WILMAPCO previously collaborated on with the community, is highlighted. Another notable project is the Hares Corner Pointer Interchange (US13 and SR 273), aimed at converting it into a grade-separated interchange. Although the project is currently in the project development phase, efforts are being made to secure grant funding in the long term. Another initiative mentioned is the extension of Sears Blvd., intended to connect it to an industrial park area. This extension aims to fill in the gaps in the multi-use pathway, which is currently fragmented due to incomplete development. Lastly, funds are allocated for electric vehicle infrastructure along the Maryland line.

Ms. Charuni Patibanda proposed the idea of hosting a community meeting in Southern New Castle County, possibly at the library, to accommodate residents who may find it difficult to travel to the usual meeting location. She offered county staff assistance in organizing and facilitating the event if needed. Ms. Dunigan noted that such meetings have been held occasionally for significant projects in the area. Ms. Patibanda emphasized the community's interest in traffic improvements and their desire to engage more with DeIDOT personnel. She requested further discussion on the matter, acknowledging the challenges of residents attending meetings in Newark. Ms. Tigist Zegeye concurred and pointed out that since this would be a joint meeting with DeIDOT, it's essential to further explore the feasibility of the idea.

Mr. Dave Gula mentioned a clarification regarding the Sears Blvd reconfiguration, emphasizing that the project's significance lies in addressing the current inability of truck traffic to exit Sears Blvd, resulting in congestion and queuing within the industrial area. Mr. David Edgell inquired

about the project's location, to which Mr. Gula explained it is situated just north of RT 4, highlighting the longstanding need for improvements to alleviate truck traffic congestion in the neighborhood.

Mr. Tyson Byrne notes that the State Highway Administration (SHA) had submitted projects. Ms. Dunigan responded, confirming that the information should be available on the spreadsheet provided, acknowledging that some submissions may have been received late. Mr. Tyson expressed his intention to ensure the missing information is obtained promptly. Ms. Heather indicated that she had not received the submission from the Maryland Transportation Authority and emphasized the importance of including it. Additionally, she inquired about the status of the span over River Bridge project. Mr. Tyson Byrne assured her that the project, funded federally, should be included, and promised to provide the necessary spreadsheet for confirmation.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Charuni Patibanda and seconded by Mr. David Edgell the Council released the draft TIP for public comment.

Motion passed.

(03-14-24-07)

15. FY2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Ms. Tigist Zegeye presented the financial information for FY25 UPWP. On the Delaware side, there is proposed funding of approximately \$3.6 million, while on the Maryland side, the total is around \$163,000.

Ms. Zegeye noted a slight discrepancy in the revised numbers, approximately \$3,000 less than previously presented. However, she expressed optimism that this discrepancy would be resolved once the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) releases full-year funding.

Mr. Tyson Byrne inquired whether Delaware is using actual numbers or projections. Ms. Zegeye clarified that they are using actual numbers from the prior year, as the current year's authorization is still pending. She acknowledged the challenges of partial funding and emphasized the importance of planning accordingly.

The grand total for FY25 funding is approximately \$3.7 million. The funding is allocated across 13 tasks, with a significant portion going towards sub-regional studies, monitoring, and regional studies. Ms. Zegeye proposed including consultant work totaling around \$1.5 million in the cash activity.

She then outlined the new projects for FY25, starting with a project from New Castle County for their Comprehensive Plan and Regional Transportation Plan Strategic Action. Other projects include the Augustine Cut-Off Bicycle Pedestrian Network Improvement, a study for building a covert under I-95, and a study for evaluating the Route 272 corridor. Ms. Zegeye explained the requested amounts for each project and staff recommendations for funding.

The presentation concluded with a recommendation to review the document for public feedback between April and May. The final draft will be presented to the PAC and TAC in April and brought back for Council approval in May before submission to the agencies for implementation.

Mr. Tyson Byrne commented that MDOT will start an upcoming round table discussion with Jasmine Champion from the Federal Highway Administration regarding a checklist development process.

16. Regional Climate Action Plan

Mr. Bill Swiatek presented the action planning efforts conducted in partnership with DVRPC and partners across the Philadelphia MSA. This initiative was prompted by a solicitation from the EPA for MPOs and states to develop climate action plans. Mr. Swiatek explained that priority action plans have been completed, with a more comprehensive one planned for the following year. These plans are crucial as they enable opportunities for implementation funding, with grants for projects outlined in the plans. The deadline for current implementation submissions is April 1st, and Mr. Swiatek encouraged prompt action for applicants.

Mr. Swiatek highlighted the involvement of a large steering committee in the development of the priority climate action plan, which includes representation from various counties and state departments. Additionally, subcommittees and working groups were formed to ensure comprehensive input and coverage of focus areas like utilities.

The presentation outlined the required elements of the climate action plan, focusing on public and stakeholder engagement, technical analysis, and greenhouse gas reduction strategies. Given time constraints, efforts were made to leverage existing climate plans and focus on achievable goals. The presentation also detailed the nine actionable measures included in the plan, covering areas such as energy efficiency, waste management, and transportation improvements.

Mr. Swiatek provided insights into the process of condensing over 400 actions from existing plans into 25 actionable measures, which were further refined to nine. He emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement and feedback in shaping the final plan.

Technical details and greenhouse gas emission trends were also presented, showcasing reductions in emissions of up to 4.4%, particularly in the electrical sector down by 13%. Mr. Swiatek discussed the significance of electricity consumption, stationary combustion, and transportation as major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in the region.

Looking ahead, Mr. Swiatek mentioned that the submitted plan is awaiting approval from the EPA, with implementation grants expected to follow. The presentation concluded with a call for continued collaboration and participation in the comprehensive planning process through 2025. Mr. Swiatek shared DVRPC.org/CPRG for further information on the Climate Planning Resource Group.

Ms. Charuni Patibanda inquired about the reasons behind the decline in electricity usage, prompting Mr. Swiatek to explain that it likely mostly stemmed from cleaner fuel used to generate electricity. Mr. John Sisson added that the push for more energy-efficient buildings could also have contributed to this trend, which he found to be commendable.

Mr. Swiatek then elaborated with visuals, noting that obtaining an inventory for emissions was a significant achievement. He presented a pie chart illustrating emissions in Cecil County, and highlighted the major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, with transportation and electricity consumption being significant factors.

Addressing a question from Mr. David Edgell regarding the reduction of emissions from more infill and redevelopment, Mr. Swiatek confirmed that it was indeed part of the conversation. However, the regional partners wanted to focus on measures with ready-to-go projects and policies that could achieve meaningful reductions in the very short term -- by 2030. Mr. Swiatek thinks smarter land use will definitely be a measure in the comprehensive climate action plan.

Ms. Patibanda raised a concern about the potential increase in electricity usage as more vehicles are electrified. She questioned whether the reduction in emissions from electric vehicles would be offset by the increased electricity usage. Mr. Swiatek acknowledged this concern. He noted that while electrification could lead to increased electricity usage, it was generally measured as reducing overall emissions.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

17. DeIDOT's Administrative Modification Request Letters

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 3:20p.m.

ATTACHMENTS: (0)