

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
JULY 11, 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 2:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Members present:

John Sisson, representing Delaware Transit Corporation
Dan Janousek, representing Geoff Anderson Maryland Department of Transportation Chief
David Edgell, Office of State Planning and Delaware Governor's Appointee
Stephen O'Connor, representing Cecil County Executive, Danielle Hornberger
Antoni Sekowski, representing New Castle County Executive, Matthew Meyer
Pam Steinebach, representing DelDOT Secretary of Transportation, Nicole Majeski
Eric Thompson, Mayor of Elsmere, representing New Castle County Municipalities

Members absent:

Charlestown Commissioner, Cecil County Municipalities
Kelly Williams, representing City of Wilmington Mayor, Michael S. Purzycki

Guests, Observers:

Kristie Arlotta, New Castle County
Emily Bull, Public
Jasmine Champion, Federal Highway Administration
William Goldman, Cecil County Planning Division
Maggie Heigl, Public
Mike Kaszyski, PAC Chair
Deanna Murphy, Board of Realtors
J. Ramos-Velazquez, Public

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
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by Elizabeth Espinal.

3. MINUTES:

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Pamela Steinbach seconded by Mr. Dan Janousek the Council approved the May 23, 2024, Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion passed.

(07-11-24-01)

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

None.

COUNCIL MEMBERS' AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

5. Chairperson's Report:

Mr. John Sisson provided an update regarding DTC's upcoming plans. He announced that the finalization of the Fall service changes is underway. A public hearing workshop is scheduled to take place at the Wilmington Library on August 8th. Several proposed changes, including the elimination of certain unproductive routes, will be discussed. Mr. Sisson encouraged everyone to review the proposed changes and submit any comments they may have.

Council Member's Reports:

Ms. Pamela Steinbach of DeIDOT reported that the only update from the Dover MPO meeting is the ongoing collaboration with the Council of Transportation to revise and enhance the prioritization criteria for the CTP. A meeting was held in March, with another scheduled for this upcoming August, followed by a third meeting in December. A vote on the new criteria is planned for February of the following year. This timeline and process will be open to the public. Ms. Steinbach is available to provide additional information if needed.

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

- On June 4th, staff attended the FRA Long Distance Service Study Working Group.
- On June 10th, the Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan held an Alternatives Workshop with about 40 people in attendance.
- On June 12th, the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee held their public workshop with about 35 people in attendance.
- On June 20th, staff participated in the Wilmington Initiative Transportation Projects Open House with about 45 people.
- On June 27th, the East Elkton Traffic Circulation Plan held its third and final public workshop. Staff presented the plan to County Executives on July 10th and will present it to the Cecil County Council on July 16th.
- On June 28th, staff participated in the MDOT MPO Roundtable Meeting.
- On July 16th, staff will participate in the NCC-State of the County Event.
- On July 17th, staff will participate in the Policy Forum, which will focus on transportation and demographic challenges. The forum is hosted by the University of Delaware IPA, DeIDOT Planning, the Delaware Population Consortium, and WILMAPCO.
- On July 18th, the Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On August 5th, the Ardens Transportation Committee will meet.
- WILMAPCO has been approved by the FHWA for a Transportation Planning Capacity Building PEER Exchange. The event is scheduled for a day-and-a-half peer exchange from October 29th-30th. Save-the-dates will be provided soon.
- An MOU between WILMAPCO, BMC (Baltimore Metropolitan Council), and MDOT has been signed to identify the roles and responsibilities of the overlapping urbanized area, specifically the Aberdeen Bel Air North and the Bel Air South Maryland urbanized areas. Similarly, an MOU establishing MPO boundaries and coordination of transportation planning and programming between DVRPC, SJTPO-MPO, and WILMAPCO is being finalized. The FY25 UPWP has been approved by FHWA, the Delaware and Maryland divisions, as well as FTA Region 3. Staff is working on requests for proposals for the new projects in the UPWP.

- Staff has issued an RFP for the Maryland 272 Corridor Plan, with proposals due by July 17th.
- The RFP for the Augustine Cut Off Multimodal Improvement Study Phase 2 was released, and proposals are due by August 5th.

Ms. Tigist concluded by sharing the status of the June financial report, approximately 91% of the budget for studies was spent by the end of the fiscal year. We are now in the new fiscal year, and this has been one of those years where we spent a good amount of our budget without significant carryovers.

7. Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Report:

Mr. Mike Kazyski reported that on June 17th, the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) convened with a full quorum. Two new members, Robin Bullock and Sarah Lester, joined the meeting, marking the first time in a while that many attendees were present in person. The Executive Director's report, presented by Ms. Tigist, included updates on the reelection of Mr. Sisson as Council Chair and Stephen O'Connor as Vice Chair, as well as discussions on the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) updates for 2025. Additionally, two Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments from DelDOT were discussed, along with several workshops related to projects on Kirkwood Highway and the East Elkton Plan.

The meeting also featured two staff presentations. Ms. Heather Dunigan presented on the Claymont Area Master Plan, highlighting the two workshops held since January. The plan covers the Claymont area, including Philadelphia Pike, Darley Green, and nearby shopping centers. Members raised questions, particularly about the redesign of Claymont and the village area.

Mr. Dave Gula provided the second presentation on the Kirkwood Highway Corridor Land Use and Transportation Plan, discussing a recent workshop and the corridor's functionality. Members engaged in extensive discussions about traffic improvements and the potential for traffic improvement districts in the area.

The meeting, which extended longer than usual, also included a discussion on the implementation of speed cameras in the City of Newark. One PAC member brought up similar situations in Montgomery County, Maryland, raising concerns about the effectiveness of speed cameras. Data from Montgomery County indicated an increase in revenue from fines, though their impact on reducing crashes and fatalities was debated.

8. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Report:

Ms. Heather Dunigan reported that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on May 16th, during which they recommended the approval of an amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) submitted by the City of Wilmington for the South Wilmington Riverfront project. The committee also received presentations on the 2024 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Performance Plan Update and the Claymont Area Master Plan.

At the June 20th meeting, the TAC elected new leadership, with Cooper Bowers from DelDOT appointed as the incoming Chairperson and Dan Janousek from MDOT as Vice Chair. The committee expressed appreciation for the leadership of Matt Rogers from New Castle County, who served as Chairperson for the past two years. During the meeting, the TAC recommended amendments to the TIP, including two requests from Cecil County: the Mechanics Valley Road Bridge over CSX and the Elk Neck Elementary School Safe Routes to School project. They also recommended approval of the 2024 CMAQ Performance Plan.

ACTION ITEMS:

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

Ms. Heather Dunigan presented a request to amend the TIP from Cecil County, to revise the funding for the replacement of the bridge on Mechanics Valley Road over the CSX Railroad. The construction funding has been extended into FY2025, reflecting a slight increase in the anticipated construction costs. She clarified that both this amendment and the subsequent one pertain to the FY2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and these changes will carry over into the FY2025-2028 TIP. Ms. Dunigan added that the document has been updated accordingly.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Stephen O'Connor and seconded by Mr. Antoni Sekowski the Council approved the TIP amendment.

Motion passed.

(07-11-24-02)

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

Ms. Heather Dunigan presented a request from Cecil County to reallocate construction funds for the Elk Neck Elementary Safe Routes to School project from FY23-24. She noted that the construction is scheduled to take place this summer, prior to the return of students. Mr. Stephen O'Connor added that the work has already commenced, as he has observed progress in the area.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Dan Janousek and seconded by Mr. Eric Thompson-Scott the Council approved the TIP amendment.

Motion passed.

(07-11-24-03)

11. To approve the 2024 CMAQ Performance Plan.

Mr. Bill Swiatek presented an update on the 2024 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Performance Plan. This plan fulfills federal requirements to incorporate performance measurement into CMAQ planning and programming, specifically addressing the mid-period progress report and performance plan for the second performance period. The report details the region's progress in meeting the required traffic congestion and mobile source emissions targets set by CMAQ projects.

The report indicates that after two years, the WILMAPCO region is on track to meet its four-year targets. Traffic congestion, measured by peak hour excessive delay conditions in 2022 and 2023, was either below or slightly above both the two- and four-year targets. Additionally, the percentage of non-single occupancy vehicle commutes exceeded expectations, and CMAQ mobile source emission reductions are also on track to meet the four-year targets in both Delaware and Cecil County.

The 2024 CMAQ Performance Plan was developed through an interagency coordination process involving members of the Air Quality Subcommittee, particularly MDOT and DeIDOT, with additional support from the DVRPC and the BMC. The WILMAPCO PAC did not take action on this item; however, the TAC recommended Council approval of the Plan via email vote, and the Air Quality Subcommittee reviewed the Plan and recommended its approval at their June 6th meeting. The staff also recommends Council approval of the 2024 CMAQ Performance Plan.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Pamela Steinbach and seconded by Mr. David Edgell the Council approved the CMAQ Performance Plan.

Motion passed.

(07-11-24-04)

PRESENTATIONS:

12. New Castle County Pathway to Sustainability Plan

Ms. Kristie Arlotta from New Castle County provided an update on the county's ongoing sustainability planning efforts. She was brought on in December to lead these initiatives, which have been progressing since the beginning of the year. The planning process aims to consolidate various existing plans and align them with the county's comprehensive goals, focusing on the implementation of sustainability objectives.

Ms. Arlotta emphasized the importance of public feedback in shaping the county's approach to sustainability. To gather input, the county has conducted extensive outreach, including public meetings and surveys, receiving over 120 responses. The feedback highlighted the community's priorities, including resource preservation, fostering resilience, and promoting equity.

The county's sustainability plan, which began development in April, includes core values centered on environmental equity, economy, energy, climate resilience, natural resource management, and environmental justice. The plan outlines specific goals, measurable targets, and strategies for achieving them. Ms. Arlotta noted that the plan is designed to be a living document, adaptable to changing circumstances and new input.

The county is also focused on areas within its control, such as the adoption of electric vehicles in its fleet and waste management at county facilities. However, broader initiatives require collaboration with partners like DelDOT, state legislators, and other stakeholders.

Public input identified several top priorities, including clean air, clean water, affordable housing, land preservation, and climate change mitigation. Ms. Arlotta highlighted the need for more educational resources on environmental justice and climate change to enhance the plan's comprehensiveness.

Ms. Arlotta shared that the county plans to finalize the sustainability plan by the end of summer, with a final public meeting scheduled for August 7th. Ms. Arlotta invited further involvement from council members and welcomed any feedback or suggestions on sustainability highlights or successful community projects that could be incorporated into the plan.

13. East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan

Mr. Bill Swiatek from WILMAPCO provided an update on the East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan, which is nearing completion. The plan focuses on three main roads in eastern Elkton: Belle Hill Road in the north, Muddy Lane in the center, and Delancy Road in the south. The study began with an analysis of current traffic and land use, followed by a phase where public feedback was gathered through surveys and workshops. The final phase involves selecting recommendations based on this input and technical evaluations, with the goal of seeking Council approval in September.

Community engagement was strong, with participation increasing as the study progressed. About 78% of residents felt the plan addressed their traffic and circulation concerns. However, some residents highlighted the need for better speed enforcement and additional improvements at the US 40 and Delancy Road intersection.

The recommendations are divided into short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions:

Short-term recommendations include maintenance requests, changes to road classifications, and improvements to signage. Some of these actions, like better pavement markings at the MD-279 and Belle Hill Road intersection, have already been implemented.

Medium-term recommendations focus on land use, particularly the need to separate truck-generating activities from residential areas, especially along Belle Hill Road. Another significant recommendation is to restrict left turns at the Royal Farms location on US 40 and Delancy Road to improve safety. There's also a proposal for a new access road to Royal Farms and a (simultaneous) upgrade to a nearby community park.

Long-term recommendations involve major infrastructure changes, such as realigning intersections and rebuilding roads. A key focus is the railroad underpass at Muddy Lane, a known trouble spot. The plan presents two options for addressing this issue, with community preference leaning towards an underpass solution. However, further study is needed to assess the environmental and social impacts of both options. Other long-term recommendations include improvements to the intersection of Belle Hill Road and MD-279 and a proposed new connector road between Delancy Road and Red Hill Road.

The plan also suggests adding shared-use paths along all three corridors to promote safe walking and cycling. Public comments on the plan are being accepted through July 29th at www.wilmaco.org/east-elkton. A final draft will be prepared based on this feedback and input from both the Town and County Councils, with the plan expected to be presented for Council endorsement in September.

14. Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan

Mr. Dave Gula presented an overview of the Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan with a focus on the latest workshop. While acknowledging that the project is not as advanced as the Elkton study, he emphasized the strong partnerships involved, particularly highlighting the active participation of DelDOT, New Castle County, and DART. These partners have been crucial in gathering direct feedback from the public.

Mr. Gula shared that during the workshop, attendees were guided through various stations, including a "newcomers' corner," despite its central location, these floor maps effectively helped new participants catch up on the project's progress. The workshop also featured a "live, work, play, and recreate" map, which allowed participants to indicate their areas of interest and helped the team ensure comprehensive community outreach.

The main objectives of the project include enhancing travel modes along the car-dominated corridor, improving connections to local communities, and supporting the sustainability and growth of local businesses. The project aims to make the corridor more pedestrian and cyclist-friendly, while also considering the diverse housing options and ensuring minimal negative impact on the communities.

Mr. Gula emphasized that a key focus is on addressing safety concerns due to high traffic speeds, particularly in areas prone to crashes involving pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. The vision for the corridor includes discouraging high speeds, promoting safe access for all, and increasing bike/ped abilities.

The workshop also explored potential transit improvements. While Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was considered, it was deemed less suitable for this corridor due to the short, local trips typical of the area. Instead, the focus will be on enhancing existing bus services, improving bus shelters, and potentially implementing transit signal priority to reduce delays.

The idea of roundabouts was discussed to improve safety by reducing crash severity, though their suitability along different segments of the corridor remains under consideration. Mr. Gula added that the corridor was divided into five distinct sections, each with its own potential road configurations, to tailor improvements to specific needs and provide better visualization for residents.

Participants were actively engaged in providing feedback, particularly in areas like the SR-2 and SR-7 grade separation and the Milltown Road area. Although not all proposed changes, such as roundabouts and bike lanes, were universally popular, the feedback gathered will be critical in refining the plan.

Mr. Gula concluded by encouraging continued public participation through the project's website, www.wilmapco.org/kirkwood where materials from the workshop are available, along with opportunities to provide additional input. The next workshop is planned for the fall, where the analysis of alternative scenarios will be presented based on the feedback received.

Mr. Sisson raised a question, noting that the topic had been previously discussed but remained unresolved. He asked, "Are we considering connections north and south of the corridor to facilitate bike and pedestrian access?"

Mr. Gula confirmed that efforts were indeed underway to address these connections. He explained that recent legislative briefings had intensified the focus on roadways linked to the corridor. He mentioned the ongoing issues at Milltown Road and Limestone Road, where traffic congestion is a persistent problem. Mr. Gula emphasized that pathway connections are a critical concern, particularly in areas where communities are situated just a few hundred feet from major roads like Kirkwood Highway and nearby shopping centers. The goal is to enhance the pedestrian and bike network, improve access to bus stops, and ensure that these connections are safer, more convenient, and compliant with ADA standards. These improvements are expected to be key outcomes of the study.

Mr. Blevins added that safety improvements on roads like Mechanics, Church, and Milltown had been frequently discussed, particularly regarding the installation of rapid beacons. He noted that legislators had raised concerns about the effectiveness of these measures and had also brought up the idea of utilizing parallel routes, such as Old Capital Trail, which are sometimes used as cut-throughs. The discussions had also considered how these connections would integrate with nearby parks like Middle Run and White Clay Creek, as well as how these improvements would fit within the broader corridor network.

Mr. Sisson then asked what would be required to close driveways, particularly given the challenges posed by separate commercial entities with established access points.

Mr. Blevins acknowledged the difficulty of this task, referencing past projects like Glasgow Avenue, where business owners immediately voiced concerns about the impact on their clientele. He compared the situation to challenges faced on Concord Pike, where similar issues arose. While closing driveways could improve safety and access for cyclists and pedestrians, it is a complex issue that cannot be easily resolved.

Mr. Sisson pointed out that even within individual shopping centers, there is resistance to sharing access points, further complicating efforts to consolidate driveways.

Mr. Gula agreed, noting that any potential changes would likely require significant public support. He mentioned that such issues might be reconsidered as shopping centers begin to reconfigure and reassess their layouts. However, he emphasized that these changes are not something that can be implemented quickly or easily.

Mr. Sisson then asked for clarification on whether the responsibility for these developments lies with county land use or another entity.

Mr. Blevins suggested that the situation is complex and might involve a combination of factors, including the need for consensus among multiple businesses. He mentioned that in some cases, such changes might only be possible during periods of significant redevelopment or rezoning, where adjustments could be made incrementally.

Ms. Dunigan added that ultimately, the Department of Transportation has the authority to permit access to projects and roadways, and they play a key role in managing these issues.

Mr. Gula mentioned that access management is also a tool for controlling speed and improving safety. He pointed out that having access points every 50 feet is not conducive to safety, especially with high traffic volumes and speeds. He emphasized the need to explore ways to influence speed limits and manage access points effectively to enhance safety.

Mr. Sekowski elaborated on the land development process, explaining that when a land development plan is submitted, there is an opportunity to review and suggest the closure or consolidation of access points. He also mentioned that cross-access agreements are often requested to facilitate future consolidation with adjacent properties. However, he noted that the impact of these efforts is limited to properties currently undergoing development.

Ms. Steinbach added that while consolidating or combining existing access points can be challenging, having detailed data on inconsistencies or safety issues at specific entrances could strengthen the case for making these changes. She emphasized that while businesses are not required to comply, having robust data could encourage cooperation.

Mr. Janousek acknowledged the challenges of such long-term changes, citing similar experiences in Montgomery County and Hartford County. He noted that while incremental improvements, such as adding sidewalks or consolidating entrances, are possible, they take time due to the fully developed nature of the surrounding areas. Additionally, he praised the Elkton Study Plan and the ongoing efforts and encouraged continued engagement with the Department of Transportation (MDOT) and State Highway Administration (SHA) as needed.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

15. DeIDOT's Administrative Modification Request Letters

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

ATTACHMENTS: (0)