

Newport Transportation Plan

Federal Highway Administration - Planning and Environmental Linkages Questionnaire https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_initiatives/pel/pel_quest.aspx		
Topic	Section Reference	Comments
1. Background:		
a. Who is the sponsor of the PEL study? (state DOT, Local Agency, Other)	Project Need	WILMAPCO Newport Transportation Study
b. What is the name of the PEL study document and other identifying project information (e.g. sub-account or STIP numbers, long-range plan, or transportation improvement program years)?	Project Need	Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), Delaware Transit Corp (DTC), Town of Newport, and WILMAPCO
c. Who was included on the study team (Name and title of agency representatives, consultants, etc.)?	Existing Conditions	The Newport Transportation Plan includes a diverse study area that encompasses Downtown Newport and its surrounding areas to the north up to and including the new Boxwood Facility along Boxwood Road (previously General Motors). The study area includes various types of communities, land uses, and zoning including industrial, commercial, and residential. The study area also includes several schools including Conrad Schools of Science, Richardson Park Learning Center, Richie Elementary School, Delaware Military Academy, and Delcastle Technical High School, as well as several parks including Ella Johnson Park, Banning Park, and Powell Ford Park.
d. Provide a description of the existing transportation facility within the corridor, including project limits, modes, functional classification, number of lanes, shoulder width, access control and type of surrounding environment (urban vs. rural, residential vs. commercial, etc.)		The study area boundary, shown on the Location Map, is comprised of the Newport Town limits with a 2010 Census population of 1,055 and was expanded to include the areas within a fifteen-minute walk of the Downtown area, which encompasses the bulk of the Newport municipal area, as well as, parts of adjacent New Castle County. The study area boundary also includes the former General Motors Plant on Boxwood Road and the proposed Newport River Trail along the

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		Christina Waterfront. The study area includes three state routes: SR 4, SR 141, and SR 62. SR 141 and SR 4 are part of the National Highway System (NHS). NHS is a network of strategic highways within the US serving major airports, ports, rail or truck terminals, railway stations, pipeline terminals and other strategic transport facilities. The remaining roads are local state roads and municipally maintained roads. Portions of SR 141 are elevated through Newport and there is a grade separated interchange at SR 4. SR 4 and SR 141 are both Principal Arterials and SR 62, Boxwood Road, is a Minor Arterial. All the state routes have highway lighting with the exception of the area adjacent to the former General Motors Plant. The study area consists of six bridges along SR 141 including Bridge 527 at Boxwood Road. Bridge 668 is located along James Street and Bridge 159 is a movable-bascule bridge over the Christina River. SR 141, SR 4, and W. Justis Street are primary evacuation routes for Wilmington's Hurricane Preparedness Plan.
e. Provide a brief chronology of the planning activities (PEL study) including the year(s) the studies were completed.	Project Description and Purpose	Century Engineering prepared a Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) Study process for the Newport Transportation Study which resulted in a PEL Report documenting the process and recommendations. The process can be divided into three phases. The first phase was the data gathering phase where existing conditions were collected and reviewed. The second phase utilized the existing conditions and community feedback gathered in the

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		<p>Visioning Workshop to analyze the opportunities, challenges, concerns, and goals of the project. Potential recommendations were developed, analyzed, and documented to be discussed with the Advisory Committee and the community. Results from these engagements were positive and the recommendations were slightly revised. The third phase of the process analyzed funding sources, prioritization and applying costs to determine categories of low, moderate, and high-cost recommendations, as well as, short, mid and long-term recommendations.</p> <p>The Study was completed between August 2019 and January 2021.</p>
f. Are there recent, current, or near future planning studies or projects in the vicinity? What is the relationship of this project to those studies/projects?	Recommendations	<p>The General Assembly provided Bond Bill funding to DNREC to advance the design of the Newport River Trail, which is separate from this study. DNREC and New Castle County reached an agreement for the County to administer this funding. It is anticipated that a concept design will begin in early 2021. Details of final design and construction, including funding, schedule, lead agency, etc. have not yet been determined.</p> <p>Additionally, a Feasibility Study was completed in 2013 to assess the benefits of re-opening the Newport Train Station. Overall, the findings of the Feasibility Study were positive and projected ridership numbers support re-opening the Newport Train Station. The Town of Newport, WILLMAPCO, DelDOT and DTC are currently</p>

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	working on this effort including securing funding for re-opening the Station.
2. Methodology used:	
a. What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for completing it?	<p>The Newport Transportation Plan examined the impacts that planned, new development will have on Newport and the surrounding area. This study analyzed the challenges, concerns, and opportunities available to create a more walkable, bikeable, and transit-friendly town.</p> <p>The main goals of the study as outlined by WILMAPCO include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the transportation network in Newport and surrounding areas of New Castle County to develop recommendations to improve its multi-modal capacity to support Newport's goal of becoming a more walkable, bikeable and transit friendly Town. 2. Determine the impacts that freight movements to and from the new Boxwood Road Facility will have on the Town and surrounding area. 3. Assess the benefits of re-opening the Newport Train Station to commuter rail service and update the data developed by the <i>2013 Feasibility Study</i>.

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		The Newport Transportation Plan developed a purpose and need statement, which centered around improving the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure while determining the needs and improvements necessary for transit to result in a more multi-modal, transit-oriented community. The study reviewed existing conditions throughout the study area and developed a series of needs, community requests, and barriers or impediments that are currently inhibiting pedestrian, bicycle, and transit usage.
b. Did you use NEPA-like language? Why or why not?	Environmental, Flooding and Stormwater	Yes, because there are state and federally regulated environmental and cultural resources present in the study area.
c. What were the actual terms used and how did you define them? (Provide examples or list)	Environmental, Flooding and Stormwater	Purpose and Need, NEPA, FHWA, Section 6(f), Section 4(f), DNREC, USACE, Section 106, SHPO, wetlands, RTE Species, floodplains
d. How do you see these terms being used in NEPA documents?	Environmental, Flooding and Stormwater	These analyses are described in the report for reference in a future NEPA study
e. What were the key steps and coordination points in the PEL decision-making process? Who were the decision-makers and who else participated in those key steps? For example, for the corridor vision, the decision was made by state DOT and the local agency, with buy-in from FHWA, the USACE, and USFWS and other resource/regulatory agencies.	Project Description and Purpose	Throughout the study, representatives from DelDOT, DTC, Town of Newport, New Castle County, and the community were invited to provide existing conditions information, review the information prepared, comment on the material, and provide feedback which was processed through subsequent revisions. In addition, legislators and local groups such as Bike Delaware were also invited to review and provide feedback throughout the study.
f. How should the PEL information be presented in NEPA?		The PEL Study may be attached

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3. Agency coordination: a. Provide a synopsis of coordination with Federal, tribal, state and local environmental, regulatory and resource agencies. Describe their level of participation and how you coordinated with them.	Project Need, Existing Conditions, and Meeting Summaries	This study had a Project Management Committee (PMC) comprised of DelDOT, DTC, Town of Newport and WILMAPCO, as well as, an Advisory Committee (AC) comprised of representatives from local businesses, the residential community, bicycle advocacy groups, legislators, and New Castle County. Both groups were primary partners in disseminating information, coordination and decision making. The community was then invited to participate in information sharing sessions to provide information and feedback. All of the meetings were advertised in advance and held on dates that provided participation by the majority of those on the committees.
b. What transportation agencies (e.g. for adjacent jurisdictions) did you coordinate with or were involved during the PEL study?	Project Need	DelDOT, DTC, New Castle County, and WILMAPCO
c. What steps will need to be taken with each agency during NEPA scoping?	Next Steps	Each recommendation that moves forward for design will continue with the NEPA process where this report leaves off. Each agency will be prepared to have a scoping meeting for the recommendation and begin the in-depth investigation into the permitting and coordination necessary for design.
4. Public coordination: 1. Provide a synopsis of your coordination efforts with the public and stakeholders.	Meeting Summaries	Community Visioning Workshop January 27, 2020 – project was introduced, information was gathered across a variety of topics including the study area boundary, parking, freight, pedestrian and bicycle concerns, transit (bus), and the train station.

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	<p>Second community workshop September 30, 2020 – analysis results and recommendations were presented for feedback</p> <p>Third community workshop December 16, 2020 – recap of the study and discussion on method of prioritization of recommendations</p>
5. Range of alternatives:	
a. What types of alternatives were looked at?	<p>Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure, Connectivity, Parking, Freight, Train Station</p> <p>Throughout the study area, various recommendations have been prepared as a result of opportunities, challenges, concerns, and requests revealed through various Advisory Committee Meetings, Public Workshops, and existing conditions analyses. Recommendations are categorized as low, medium, and high cost.</p> <p>Low Cost/Short Term Improvements are lower cost (up to \$250,000) easily implementable recommendations that can be performed within three years. These smaller projects do not individually meet all the goals of the study's Purpose and Need, but they do help temporarily remedy some of the Town's concerns. These improvements can be implemented while funding is being sought for the larger projects or design for the larger projects is occurring. These projects can usually be implemented by the Town, New Castle County, DelDOT's Pave & Rehab or Traffic sections, and other smaller entities that have available funding.</p>

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		<p>Medium Cost/Mid-Term Improvements are between the lower cost and higher cost improvements (\$250,000 - \$1,000,000). These improvement projects usually occur three to eight years out from the study. These projects typically go through a capital prioritization program, such as through WILMAPCO or DelDOT, and have a multitude of funding options from local to federal funding. Typically, they are funded through DelDOT's 6-year Capital Transportation Program (CTP), WILMAPCO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and DTC's 5-year Business Plan.</p> <p>Larger, long term projects generally occur beyond year eight and require the highest costs (over \$1,000,000). These projects are placed in WILMAPCO's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP identifies our region's long-term transportation needs and the projects and activities that address them. The RTP extends at least two decades and must be financially reasonable (based on anticipated revenues) while meeting air quality standards. The projects in the Plan are divided into the Constrained List (projects that are funded in the CTP) and the Aspirations List (projects which are not yet funded). Only transportation projects found in the RTP, are eligible for federal funding. It is a living plan, subject to continual revision (at least every four years) and a tool for informed transportation and policy decisions.</p>

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b. How did you select the screening criteria and screening process?	Project Need	Recommendations that were deemed "feasible" were included in the report and will move forward for further study. To be deemed feasible the recommendations must meet the project needs statement, while having the ability to be designed and constructed.
c. For alternative(s) that were screened out, briefly summarize the reasons for eliminating the alternative(s). (During the initial screenings, this generally will focus on fatal flaws.)	Proposed Improvements	Fatal flaws on recommendations that did not move forward included recommendations that did not meet the purpose and need statement, recommendations that were too costly or required a large amount of right-of-way versus the benefit that the recommendation provided. Also, if recommendations were not supported by multiple agencies and the community they were not chosen to move forward either.
d. Which alternatives should be brought forward into NEPA and why?	Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure, Connectivity, Parking, Freight, Train Station	As funding allows, all of the recommendations in The Newport Transportation Plan should move forward for NEPA as collectively they will provide a transit, pedestrian, and bicycle friendly community meeting the needs of the community, future growth and the Purpose and Need Statement.
e. Did the public, stakeholders, and agencies have an opportunity to comment during this process?	Meeting Summaries	Yes; three community workshops were held to solicit feedback and input.
f. Were there unresolved issues with the public, stakeholders, and/or agencies?		No
7. Planning assumptions and analytical methods:		
a. What is the forecast year used in the PEL study?	N/A	N/A
b. What method was used for forecasting traffic volumes?	N/A	N/A
c. Are the planning assumptions and the corridor vision/purpose and need statement consistent with each other and with the long-range transportation plan? Are the assumptions still valid?	Next Steps and Project Need	Yes

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d.	What were the future year policy and/or data assumptions used in the transportation planning process related to land use, economic development, transportation costs, and network expansion?	Costs were estimated using 2021-unit prices.
8.	Environmental resources (wetlands, cultural, etc.) reviewed.	
a.	In the PEL study, at what level of detail was the resource reviewed and what was the method of review?	Desktop Review and field verification
b.	Is this resource present in the area and what is the existing environmental condition for this resource?	It appears from our desktop review there are environmental, cultural and Section 4(f) resources present in the project study areas.
c.	What are the issues that need to be considered during NEPA, including potential resource impacts and potential mitigation requirements (if known)?	It appears there could be impacts to the resources with many of the recommendations presented in this report.
d.	How will the planning data provided need to be supplemented during NEPA?	Coordination with appropriate State and Federal resource agencies will be imperative at the start of the next phase of design for each individual project.
9.	List environmental resources you are aware of that were not reviewed in the PEL study and why. Indicate whether they will need to be reviewed in NEPA and explain why.	<p>Seven Parks: Banning Park Westview Park Absalom Jones Community Park Ella Johnson Memorial Park Christina River Access Area Newport Skate Park Powell Ford Park</p> <p>Cultural Resources: Washington-Rochambeau Route and Encampment Site Oliver Evans Homesite Penial United Methodist Church</p> <p>Wetlands: Primarily along the Christina River</p>

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		These resources will need to be reviewed in NEPA and further coordination with the appropriate State and Federal resource agencies will be required.
10. Were cumulative impacts considered in the PEL study? If yes, provide the information or reference where the analysis can be found.	N/A	N/A
11. Describe any mitigation strategies discussed at the planning level that should be analyzed during NEPA.	N/A	N/A
12. What needs to be done during NEPA to make information from the PEL study available to the agencies and the public? Are there PEL study products which can be used or provided to agencies or the public during the NEPA scoping process?		The PEL Study will be available to agencies involved in the planning and design processes.
13. Are there any other issues a future project team should be aware of?	N/A	N/A