

PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WILMAPCO Hybrid-format Meeting, April 15, 2024

Minutes prepared by Elizabeth Espinal.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski, PAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present: 7

Mark Blake, GHADA
Tracy Chamblee, Southern New Castle County Alliance
Carlos de los Ramos, AARP
Mike Kaszyski, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and PAC Chair
Bill Lower, Committee of 100
Deanna Murphy, Cecil County Board of Realtors
Barry Shotwell, 7/40 Alliance

Absent: 9

Serene Abiy, University of Delaware
Bill Dunn, Civic League for New Castle County
Patricia Folk, Cecil County
Richard Janney, Southern New Castle County
Glenn Pusey, Bear Glasgow Council
Anna Quisel, League of Women Voters of New Castle County
Vic Singer, Civic League for New Castle County
Josh Solge, City of Newark
Dave Tancredi, Milltown-Limestone Civic Alliance

Staff Members: 5

Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
Elizabeth Espinal, Administrative Assistant
Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Dawn Voss, Outreach Coordinator
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Guests: 2

Sarah Lester, Cornerstone West in Wilmington
Tina Merrill, DNREC

2. Approval of the February 12, 2024, Meeting Minutes

ACTION: There was not a quorum of PAC members present, which is necessary for Administrative Actions. The PAC approved the February 12, 2024, PAC Meeting Minutes through an email vote on June 3, 2024.

3. Public Comment Period:

None.

4. Executive Director's Report:

Ms. Tigist Zegeye shared the following public outreach information:

- The Council met on March 14. The Chairperson appointed a nominating committee for the 2024-2025 officers which included Heather Murphy (MDOT), Dave Edgell (State Planning Office), and Pam Steinbach (DeIDOT). During this meeting the Council had the following Action Items: Amend the FY2023-2026 TIP to include 5 projects requested by DeIDOT: First, amending the Transit Vehicle Air Filtration System Project; Second, amend the TIP to include revised funding for US13 – US40 to Memorial Drive Pedestrian Improvements; Third, revised funding for S. College Avenue Gateway Project; Fourth to revise funding for SR9, River Road Area Improvements, Flood Remediation; Fifth, to revise funding for Tyler McConnell Bridge, SR 141 Montchanin Road to Alapocas Road. The Council also released the FY 2025-2028 TIP for public comment. Their agenda also included presentations on FY2025 UPWP and Regional Climate Action Plan.
- On February 21, the Kirkwood Highway Transportation and Land Use Plan held a Scenario Planning Workshop with 60 people in attendance. An Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for May 22nd and a public meeting will be held on June 10th.
- On February 22, Staff participated in DeIDOT's Council on Transportation meeting in Dover.
- On February 22, staff participated in the Downes Elementary School family night.
- On February 26 and March 1, Staff hosted a pedestrian safety station at Downes Elementary School.
- On February 26, Staff participated in the State Rail Plan Kickoff meeting.
- On February 29, the Claymont Area Master Plan had a Public Visioning Workshop with 50 people in attendance.
- On March 18, Staff presented at the University of Delaware, Epsilon Eta fraternity on Sustainable Transportation Planning and a career in planning.
- On March 20, the US202 Monitoring Committee met, and a public meeting will be held on June 5th.
- On March 21, the Route 9 Monitoring Committee met, and will meet again on April 26.
- On March 27, the East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan had a second public workshop with 40 people in attendance. A second public survey for the East Elkton Plan will be available through April 27 on the project's website.
- On April 1, the Ardens Monitoring Committee met, and will meet again on May 6.
- On April 10, the Churchman's Crossing Monitoring Committee met, and a public workshop will be held on May 15th.
- On April 16, a TIP public workshop will be held at the WILMAPCO offices from 4-6 p.m. Then, on May 1 a second TIP workshop will be held at the Middletown Town Hall from 5-7 p.m.
- On April 17, Staff will be participating in the Delaware Safety Summit
- On April 18, Staff will participate in a panel presenting neighborhood revitalization efforts at the Delaware Equity Summit.
- On April 19, Staff will attend the Wilmington Earth Day Event in Cool Spring Park with Tropo, the Air Quality Partnership mascot.
- On May 16, staff will participate in Downes Elementary School's Bike to School Day.
- June 20, the annual Wilmington Initiatives public workshop will be held in the City/County Building Lobby.
- Staff continue to coordinate with DVRPC on a Regional Comprehensive Climate Action Plan for the Philadelphia MSA.

ACTION ITEMS:

5. To review the Public Outreach Portion of the Draft FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program

Ms. Dawn Voss presented the Unified Planning Work Program's (UPWP) Public Outreach portion for endorsement from the PAC. She explained that the UPWP outlines the planning work done at WILMAPCO, detailing who will perform the work, the cost of the tasks, and the sources of funding for the fiscal year. The document is currently available for public comment until May 13th, and she encouraged PAC members to visit the website at www.wilmapco.org/UPWP to review and comment on the document.

Ms. Voss highlighted that the outreach portion of the program aims to disseminate information to the public using various methods to reach as many people as possible. The goal is to engage a broad audience in the transportation planning process through public meetings, workshops, walkable community workshops, presentations, and participation in health and safety events. Recognizing that there isn't a one-size-fits-all process, the program develops participation strategies tailored to the specific needs of different audiences.

Ms. Voss emphasized that the transportation justice outreach is to engage communities identified in the 2019 Transportation Justice Report, including ethnic or racial minorities, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency. Strategies include building relationships with these communities, involving trusted local leaders, acknowledging past harms caused by land use and transportation planning, and educating the public about the involvement process, the TIP process, the regional transportation plan, and air quality issues. Efforts are made to use clear, jargon-free language in educational materials to ensure accessibility.

Ms. Voss further explained that outreach materials include brochures, booklets, pamphlets, flyers, videos, a quarterly newsletter (available via email and hard copy), and a monthly e-newsletter. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Nextdoor are also utilized to reach local communities. The website is regularly maintained and updated with information about ongoing plans, projects, and opportunities for public participation. Additionally, outreach to school children includes safety and education programming, such as Bike to School Day and Walk to School Day, in partnership with local schools, Safe Kids Delaware, Safe Routes to School, and DelDOT.

The air quality public outreach is conducted in partnership with the Air Quality Partnership of Delaware, a multi-agency group that includes the Dover/Kent MPO, DNREC, DART, and Delaware Commute Solutions. This outreach encourages public awareness of air quality and actions individuals can take to improve it. The program's mascot, Tropo, will be present at the Earth Day event in Cool Spring Park in Wilmington.

Outreach efforts cover all tasks in the UPWP, including advertising participation opportunities, conducting surveys, and managing the public opinion survey, which is conducted every four years. The next survey is scheduled for 2026.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Mark Blake seconded by Mr. William Lower, the PAC Members reviewed and endorsed the Public Outreach Portion of the Draft FY 2025 UPWP.*

* Pat Folk was unable to attend the meeting. She reviewed the Action Items in advance and voted to endorse.

6. To review the Draft FY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program

Ms. Heather Dunigan began by informing PAC members that the Draft TIP is currently open for public comment, with the deadline extended to May 13th. The extension was made to accommodate a request from the Council to add a second public workshop in Middletown, the first in several years. The first public workshop will take place on April 16th at WILMAPCO, and the second will be on May 1st at Middletown Town Hall. The extended comment period allows attendees to digest information from the workshops and submit feedback.

The workshops will follow a seminar format, featuring information about WILMAPCO and the TIP, with the highlight being interactions with project engineers who will present detailed project boards. This format allows the public to engage directly with the engineers, sharing ideas and asking questions, which is more effective than a standard presentation.

Ms. Dunigan emphasized the importance of public involvement throughout the year, particularly during the initial planning stages when projects are being defined. Once projects reach the TIP stage, their scope is mostly set, and only details are finalized.

Reviewing the TIP, the largest funding share (57%) is allocated to multimodal projects, reflecting the implementation of the complete streets policy shared by DeIDOT and MDOT. Roadway projects make up 15% of the total funding, a significant decrease due to the completion of major highway projects. Notably, the 896/I-95 interchange project exemplifies a multimodal approach, addressing roadway safety while also providing pedestrian and cyclist crossings.

By funding category, 55% is dedicated to preservation, aligning with WILMAPCO's goal of maintaining existing infrastructure before expanding it. Expansion-only projects account for about 5% of the total funding. Geographically, Cecil County receives a small share (5%), while the Delaware statewide element has increased to 70%, raising transparency concerns about specific fund allocations.

Funding sources are roughly split between federal and state contributions, with a small portion from local governments and developers. New projects in the TIP include the Diamond State Rail Lines study, which explores the feasibility of passenger rail service between Newark/Wilmington and various locations in Delaware and Maryland. Other new projects include single-lane roundabout conversions, the Governor Printz Blvd. Road diets, the Hares Corner interchange redesign, the Sears Blvd. extension, and the US 40 shared use pathway. Additionally, the Cecil County element includes funding for the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program.

Ms. Dunigan also presented outreach materials, such as the TIP Quick Guide, summarizing new projects, workshop details, funding snapshots, and project maps. These materials are used during public outreach events to provide a quick overview of the TIP. Ms. Dunigan concluded by inviting any questions from the PAC members.

Mr. Mike Kazyski asked Ms. Heather Dunigan about the inclusion of private funding in the "other funding" category, specifically inquiring about private developer projects.

Ms. Dunigan explained that some of the projects on the new projects list, such as the roundabouts, are being funded through Southern New Castle County's Transportation Investment District (TID) program. This setup involves a long-range plan where developers contribute to a collective fund instead of making individual improvements. This pooled funding approach allows for more comprehensive improvements as determined locally. There are other instances where developers

contribute funds, making it a small but notable portion of the overall program. In Cecil County, many projects receive federal funds with a county match, without state funding.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski added, the Southern New Castle TID, covering the area from the canal down to Middletown, includes East Town and West Town TIDs. He then asked if these areas participate in the TID program.

Ms. Dunigan confirmed that a few projects are being added in this round. There are TIDs in Middletown, parts of New Castle County, and one in Newark. Several others are under consideration, but these are the main ones in place.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski shared that he has a couple of projects in the Southern New Castle TID and the West Town TID. He mentioned that from Ms. Dunigan's presentation, it seems that participation in the TID requires contributions based on the number of houses built or the square footage of non-residential usage. He mentioned being unsure if other projects involving TIP funding have lost their funding sources for some larger projects. He confirmed that some TIP funding was received for the route 40 area, where the grade separation is, but I believe that is more compartmentalized within that region.

Ms. Dunigan replied that additionally, there is a project in South Wilmington funded partially by private developers. Developer contributions often go unaccounted for in the program, especially for small intersections and sidewalk improvements. However, a significant portion of private funds goes into the transportation system beyond what is documented in the TIP.

Mr. Kaszyski finalized the series of questions, inquiring about the increase from 64% to 70% statewide funding, is there a specific region outside of New Castle County seeing significant increases, such as Sussex County.

Ms. Dunigan responded that she is not as familiar with Sussex County, but growth rates and associated transportation needs could account for much of that increase. While 70% is statewide, a significant portion still benefits our region. This brings up concerns about transparency. We list out some projects like safety and bridge projects in the statewide category, but other areas like paving, rehab, and intersection improvements are not as detailed. If the statewide funding share continues to grow, we might need to start including more specific listings to enhance transparency.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. William Lower seconded by Mr. Mark Blake, the PAC Members reviewed and endorsed the Draft FY 2025- 2028 Transportation Improvement Program.*

* Pat Folk was unable to attend the meeting. She reviewed the Action Items in advance and voted to endorse.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

7. Kirkwood Highway Corridor Land Use and Transportation Plan

Mr. Dave Gula presented an update on the Kirkwood Highway and transportation study. He explained that the study began in August, with public outreach starting in September. The study area encompasses Kirkwood Highway, from just outside of Newark to the Wilmington border, including the town of Elsmere, covering about 8 miles of roadway.

Mr. Gula noted that the unique shape of the study area is due to the CSX tracks serving as a natural boundary on the southern and eastern sides, while transportation analysis areas define the northern boundaries. One emerging issue is the lack of trail connections to parks north of Kirkwood Highway, prompting an exploration of creating meaningful connections to enhance accessibility.

The study aims to strengthen alternative travel modes on this car-centric roadway, improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, preserve and enhance existing neighborhoods, and support the business environment to remain competitive and accommodate future economic growth. Promoting sustainable development patterns is also a key goal.

The importance of having a comprehensive plan was highlighted, as it provides a blueprint for desired future growth and development. The study involves extensive public engagement, including data collection, visioning exercises, and scenario planning. Task 1 involved gathering data on demographics, market analysis, crash statistics, and transit usage. Task 2, the visioning phase, is now complete.

Public workshops have been held to gather feedback and ideas. An advisory committee, comprising local residents and stakeholders, has been established to refine concepts before presenting them to the broader public. Common themes from stakeholder interviews include concerns about traffic and development changes, safety, congestion, and the need for better bus service and pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure.

Mr. Gula shared findings from a completed market analysis which revealed diverse housing types along the corridor, which helps its resilience. Affordable housing is crucial for people working in lower-wage jobs, ensuring they can live close to work. The analysis also emphasized the benefits of transportation investment for real estate activity and community vibrancy.

The next steps involve developing and analyzing different scenarios for the corridor, considering improvements for various modes of transportation. Concepts such as bus rapid transit, light rail, and multimodal improvements will be explored, though their feasibility and cost-effectiveness will be assessed. The goal is to create activity nodes and better connectivity for different sections of the corridor.

Mr. Gula concluded by encouraging attendance at the next workshop scheduled for June 10th, where preliminary scenarios will be presented for public feedback before detailed analysis. The project website offers comprehensive information, including workshop materials and ongoing surveys. He welcomed questions from the audience.

Ms. Sarah Lester inquired about the potential impact of Kirkwood Highway on connections to Union Street and future improvements.

Mr. Dave Gula responded by acknowledging the relevance of the question. He explained that discussions are ongoing with the City of Wilmington and the Wilmington Initiatives Partners to ensure a smooth transition. Dave highlighted that a study on Union Street, resembling Kirkwood Highway in terms of lane structure but differing in development and pedestrian use, preempted these discussions. He noted that the Union Street program aligns well with the goals for Kirkwood Highway, such as reducing traffic speeds and enhancing multimodal friendliness. The connection between Union Street and Kirkwood Highway is an ongoing topic, although the city is not yet ready for a comprehensive study. Some efforts, like signage and signaling to slow speeds, are already in progress, especially after a vehicle crash raised awareness of speed

issues on Lincoln Street. He emphasized that continued collaboration with the Wilmington Initiatives aims to better integrate these corridors, even though immediate solutions are not yet feasible.

Ms. Lester expressed appreciation for the efforts and mentioned her interest in urban planning, hoping that future measures will prevent accidents like cars hitting houses.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski asked a related question about the West End and the integration of this study with new TID initiatives.

Mr. Gula explained that while they are not dictating terms to the TID, there is coordination with staff involved in the TID. This ensures that the corridor improvements discussed can potentially extend into TID areas. Heather Dunigan added that the Newport to Newark Pathway plan, which overlaps the boundary areas, has been shared with Dave for consideration, indicating good progress on the county's part.

Mr. Kaszyski pointed out that right-of-way issues are significant for such improvements and suggested pooling fees to fund larger projects, rather than piecemeal development. He also mentioned the challenges of separating Kirkwood and Limestone due to existing structures at the intersections.

Mr. Gula acknowledged these challenges, mentioning a concept called "raised left turns," although it hasn't gone through a formal process. He emphasized that innovative solutions are being encouraged by all project partners, including WILMAPCO, DeIDOT, DTC, and New Castle County. The goal is to explore both existing successful solutions and new ideas over the next year, addressing issues like traffic speed and safety. He reiterated that the 85th percentile speed being 10 mph over the limit contributes to severe crashes and pedestrian fatalities, making roadway safety improvements crucial.

8. Other Business

Ms. Sarah Lester expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to work with the WILMAPCO team. She stated that WILMAPCO is a great partner for the Open Streets events, she announced that there is an event scheduled for this Saturday, April 20th. Ms. Lester added that these events focus on corridors in Wilmington where future improvements can be made through partnerships with WILMAPCO, the city, and the state. Ms. Lester invited everyone to attend the event, noting that several blocks of North Walnut Street will be closed from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

9. Adjournment

The PAC adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Attachments: (0)