

**PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
WILMAPCO Hybrid-format Meeting, August 12, 2024

Minutes prepared by Elizabeth Espinal.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski, PAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL**

**Members Present: 7**

Richard Janney, Southern New Castle County  
Mike Kaszyski, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and PAC Chair  
Sarah Lester, Cornerstone West  
Bill Lower, Committee of 100  
Glenn Pusey, Bear Glasgow Council  
Barry Shotwell, 7/40 Alliance  
Josh Solge, City of Newark

**Absent: 11**

Serene Abiy, University of Delaware  
Robin Bullock, Holloway Terrace  
Carlos de los Ramos, AARP  
Bill Dunn, Civic League for New Castle County  
Patricia Folk, Cecil County  
Mark Blake, GHADA  
Tracy Chamblee, Southern New Castle County Alliance  
Deanna Murphy, Cecil County Board of Realtors  
Anna Quisel, League of Women Voters of New Castle County  
Vic Singer, Civic League for New Castle County  
Dave Tancredi, Milltown-Limestone Civic Alliance

**Staff Members: 5**

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

**Guests: 1**

Robert Hicks, Public

**2. Approval of the June 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

**ACTION:** Approval of the PAC Meeting Minutes was postponed until the October meeting due to no quorum.

**3. Public Comment Period:**

None.

#### **4. Executive Director's Report:**

Ms. Tigist Zegeye shared the following public outreach information:

- The Council met on July 11<sup>th</sup> and addressed three action items. The first was to amend the TIP at the request of Cecil County to include revised funding for the replacement of the Mechanics Valley Road over CSX bridge project. The second amendment, also from Cecil County, was to include funding for school zone and infrastructure improvements for the Elk Neck Elementary School project. The third item was the approval of the 2024 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Performance Plan for the region. Additionally, the Council received presentations on the New Castle County Pathway to Sustainability Plan, the East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan, and the Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan.
- On June 4, staff attended the FRA Long Distance Service Study working group meeting.
- On June 10, the Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Plan held an Alternatives Workshop with around 40 participants.
- On June 12, the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee held a workshop with approximately 35 attendees.
- On June 20, the Wilmington Initiatives Project hosted an open house with about 45 participants.
- On June 28, staff participated in the MDOT MPO Roundtable.
- On June 27, the final public workshop for the East Elkton Plan was held. Staff will present the draft plan to the Elkton Council on July 10 and the Cecil County Council on July 16.
- On July 11, staff met with DeIDOT to support improvements to identifying their equity focus areas.
- On July 12, staff met with New Castle County to support advancing environmental justice through the Sustainability Plan.
- On July 16, staff participated in the New Castle County State of the County event.
- On July 17, staff attended a public forum titled "Delaware's Changing Landscape—Transportation and Demographics in a Post-COVID Era," hosted by the University of Delaware IPA, DeIDOT Planning, the Delaware Population Consortium, and WILMAPCO.
- On July 17, proposals were due for the Maryland 272 Corridor Plan. Interviews were completed on August 5, and Wallace Montgomery was chosen as the lead consultant for the project.
- Similarly, the RFP for the Augustine Cut-Off Multimodal Improvement Study was released. Three proposals were received, and interviews are scheduled for the week of August 19.
- On August 15, the Route 9 Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On September 2, the Ardens Transportation Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On September 4, staff will lead a site visit and networking event for the East Elkton Plan. More information and registration details are available on the APA Delaware website.
- The FY2023-2025 UPWP has been approved by both FHWA Maryland and Delaware Divisions, as well as the FTA.
- Lastly, staff will have a table at the Newark Community Day on September 15. Feel free to stop by.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

None.

## **PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

### **5. East Elkton Traffic Circulation and Safety Plan**

Mr. Bill Swiatek presented the East Elkton project on behalf of WILMAPCO, noting that the project is nearing completion as WILMAPCO advances other initiatives. He provided a refresher on the study area, which includes the eastern part of Elkton and three main corridors: Belle Hill Road to the north, Muddy Lane in the middle, and Delancy Road to the south, reaching US 40. A robust steering committee, consisting of various town officials, school representatives, the fire department, state police, the East Coast Greenway, MDOT, and other stakeholders, guided the development of the plan.

The planning process began with a review of existing traffic and land use conditions. This was followed by a visioning period that included a survey and a workshop. Based on data and public feedback, draft recommendations were developed and presented at a second public workshop, along with a second survey. These recommendations were further refined after community input, and the project is now approaching the final stage, with a plan set for Council endorsement in September.

Public engagement highlights included two general surveys and three workshops. Additionally, a parallel youth outreach effort was conducted through middle and high schools in Elkton. Special outreach was also made to Transportation Justice communities in Elkton to encourage their participation in surveys and workshops. A public website was maintained throughout the study, and live mapping was used to track survey responses and ensure representation from across the community. The second round of outreach surpassed the first in terms of participation, indicating growing community involvement.

The first survey focused on visioning and revealed significant concern about traffic safety, particularly on Delancy Road, the busiest of the three corridors. Muddy Lane was the second-highest concern, with Belle Hill Road third. A parallel youth survey showed that students wished for more walking and biking options, with many expressing a desire for safer sidewalks and bike lanes.

In a follow-up youth survey conducted at a high school pop-up event, 60 students provided feedback on Delancy Road and various pathway connections in the study area. Students emphasized the need for better connectivity between neighborhoods and commercial areas.

A second general survey found that 80% of respondents felt the plan addressed their safety concerns. Some suggested improvements at the US 40 and Delancy Road intersection, increased speed enforcement, and skepticism about the effectiveness of certain concepts. However, overall satisfaction with the plan was high.

The plan's recommendations are divided into short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions. Short-term recommendations include addressing immediate issues such as crosswalk visibility, vegetation overgrowth, and pedestrian signal timing at the intersection of Belle Hill Road and Elkton Road. Other short-term actions involve correcting roadway classifications, as Belle Hill Road and Muddy Lane are currently misclassified according to their traffic volumes.

Medium-term recommendations focus on land use planning. For example, Belle Hill Road hosts a mix of truck-generating and residential use. It could benefit from better zoning. On Muddy Lane, there are concerns about planned residential growth in environmentally sensitive areas.

These residential uses should be reconsidered. The intersection of Delancy Road and Royal Farms is another area of concern, with a recommendation to restrict left turns to improve safety.

Long-term recommendations include realigning roads and improving intersections. One of the major proposals is to address the underpass at Muddy Lane and the Amtrak railroad tracks, which is considered unsafe for trucks, pedestrians, and cyclists. The community prefers an improved underpass over building a bridge, but further study is recommended. Another key issue is the truck traffic at the intersection of MD-279 and Belle Hill Road, where realignment options have been developed to improve safety and traffic flow.

For Delancy Road, the plan recommends a redesign that includes a center shared turn lane, two 11-foot lanes, and a 10-foot shared-use path for pedestrians and cyclists. This shared-use path is also proposed for Muddy Lane and Belle Hill Road, creating a continuous north-south connection along the corridor.

Mr. Swiatek concluded by noting that the plan is at the final stage of public comment, with a few minor feedback points that will not affect the overall recommendations. The plan is available for review at [wilmapco.org/east-elkton](http://wilmapco.org/east-elkton).

Mr. Glen Pusey inquired whether the Delancy Road project would be a state or county responsibility, and Mr. Bill Swiatek confirmed it would be a state project. Mr. Janney asked if the project was included in the state's capital improvement program, to which Mr. Swiatek replied that it was not.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski raised concerns about ongoing industrial and residential developments along Belle Hill Road, asking if these projects could contribute to roadway improvements. Mr. Swiatek noted that the developments had been considered in the planning process, and while specific contributions hadn't been finalized, there may be opportunities for developers to support improvements, such as building pathways.

Mr. Kaszyski observed that Delaware requires developers to improve roadways in front of their properties and wondered if Maryland might adopt a similar policy. Mr. Pusey asked if Maryland has a comparable program, and Mr. Kaszyski responded that it does not, though recent efforts in Maryland have been on a smaller scale.

## **6. WILMAPCO UPWP Studies for FY 2025**

Mr. Dave Gula provided an update on the WILMAPCO FY 2025 Project submissions, outlining the new projects included in the UPWP FY 2025, which had been approved by both the committee and the Council on May 23rd. The new submissions include the following:

- 1. First and Final Mile Freight Network – An update to an existing study submitted by DeIDOT and New Castle County.**
- 2. New Castle County Strategic Action Plan – A submission from New Castle County.**
- 3. Augustine Cut-Off Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Improvements (Phase Two) – Submitted by DeIDOT.**
- 4. Rocky Run Pathway Underpass Feasibility Study – Another submission from DeIDOT.**
- 5. Maryland Route 272 Corridor Study – Submitted by Cecil County.**

Mr. Dan Blevins elaborated on the First and Final Mile Freight Network project. He explained that it updates a study conducted in 2021 using pre-COVID data from 2019. The updated study

will use current data and overlay it with various plans and studies, including the New Castle County Comprehensive Plan. The goal is to address conflicts between residential and industrial areas, such as ensuring truck traffic is diverted from residential neighborhoods to roads designed for heavier loads. Whitman, Requardt & Associates will assist in this 12-month project.

Mr. Blevins also discussed the New Castle County Strategic Action Plan, which aims to better align the county's Comprehensive Plan with WILMAPCO's RTP, particularly in mobility and transportation. The study will explore national best practices and may identify ordinances to improve land use and transportation planning. RK&K will lead this 12-month study.

Mr. Gula then resumed by presenting the Augustine Cut-Off Multimodal Improvements Study Phase II. This study follows DelDOT's 2022 review of pedestrian and bike improvements along the corridor, which runs from Park Drive and Concord Pike to Lovering Avenue. Challenges include traffic exceeding speed limits and crash clusters at key intersections. The project will require significant public outreach, especially in residential areas where vocal opposition exists. A consulting firm will be selected soon to assist with this effort.

Mr. Gula then introduced the Rocky Run Pathway Underpass Feasibility Study, stemming from the Concord Pike Master Plan. The study will explore the feasibility of creating a grade-separated pedestrian and cyclist underpass at Rocky Run. Three underpass cells currently exist, and the study will determine whether one can be repurposed for pedestrian use or if a separate tunnel is necessary. The project will focus on ensuring accessibility, safety, and stormwater management.

Mr. Bill Swiatek concluded the presentation with the Maryland Route 272 Corridor Plan, requested by Cecil County and led by Wallace Montgomery. The plan will assess the 272 corridors from I-95 to the rural areas south of the town of North East. The study will focus on improving traffic flow, pedestrian and bike infrastructure, and transit experiences across different segments of the corridor. Public engagement will be a key component, with workshops, surveys, and outreach planned throughout the process.

Mr. Gula wrapped up by briefly mentioning the ongoing projects, including support for various monitoring plans such as the Ardens, Churchman's Crossing, Claymont Area Master Plan, Governor Printz Corridor, Kirkwood Highway, US 40, and Newport Transportation Plan. He also noted that the Newark Bicycle Plan Update is being conducted in-house, with more outreach planned for the fall.

Mr. Richard Janney raised concerns about aggressive driving, describing how despite adhering to the speed limit, he often encounters tailgating and vehicles speeding past him at up to 90 miles per hour. He questioned why drivers risk their lives in such a reckless manner, particularly when speeding gains little time advantage. Mr. Blevins acknowledged the widespread issue of speeding, particularly overnight, and noted that human enforcement remains the most effective deterrent, despite ongoing state police efforts.

Mr. Janney also criticized the ineffectiveness of traffic circles in controlling speed and praised the courtesy of truck drivers, contrasting them with the public's disdain for large trucks. Mr. Blevins concurred, suggesting that if the general public underwent the same rigorous training as truck drivers, many would not hold licenses. Janney proposed that a mandatory driver's education course should accompany license renewals to emphasize road safety. He further reflected on how easily large or high-performance vehicles, like his Rolls Royce, can mask speed, turning them into dangerous "weapons" in the hands of careless drivers. Janney also

addressed the ongoing concerns of impaired driving due to drugs and alcohol, acknowledging efforts to curb the problem but expressing doubt that it would ever be fully eradicated.

Ms. Sarah Lester then discussed the broader issue of road safety in Wilmington, Delaware, emphasizing the need for advocacy and collaboration to raise awareness about the dangers of reckless driving. She inquired about the status of recent road safety studies conducted by DelDOT and WILMAPCO. Mr. Dave Gula responded by highlighting financial constraints and opposition from property owners that have delayed some road safety projects, including those aimed at improving bike and pedestrian infrastructure.

Mr. Mike Kaszyski noted that past studies, such as TID's (Transportation Improvement Districts), could inform current road safety efforts, while Mr. Gula and Mr. Kaszyski discussed the challenges posed by roadway design, topography, and local resistance to change. Lastly, Mr. Kaszyski and Mr. Blevins touched on ongoing traffic and infrastructure studies in Southern New Castle County, which aim to improve safety and connectivity while balancing the needs of developers and residents.

## **7. Other Business**

Ms. Sarah Lester raised a concern regarding the Wilmington Initiatives, noting that while she values the collaboration between various entities to advance projects in Wilmington, there may be important topics and projects, particularly DelDOT initiatives, that the PAC and residents are unaware of. She expressed uncertainty about whether it is within the committees' scope to discuss all projects, suggesting that some might not be addressed in their meetings.

Ms. Zegeye responded by acknowledging that this is a matter worth discussing further offline. She explained that WILMAPCO has specialized committees, such as those focused on US40, Churchman's Crossing, Claymont and many more, which handle those specific projects. The role of the PAC, she clarified, is primarily focused on public outreach for broader initiatives, such as the long-range plan and the UPWP. While some projects are presented to the PAC and other committees, they do not typically discuss every individual project.

Mr. Dave Gula agreed with Ms. Zegeye, emphasizing that specific projects are not usually addressed in these forums. He reiterated the need for further offline coordination to address the issue and ensure that all relevant stakeholders are informed.

## **8. Adjournment**

The PAC adjourned at 7:11p.m.

**Attachments: (0)**