

**TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**November 21, 2024**

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, November 21, 2024, at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, DE 19713 and via video conference/conference call.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Cooper Bowers, from Delaware Department of Transportation, and TAC Chair, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

**2. TAC Members present:**

Cooper Bowers, Delaware Department of Transportation  
Samantha Bulkilvish, Delaware Office of State Planning  
David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning  
Taylor Englert, Department of Natural Resources and Environment  
Michael Fortner, City of Newark  
William Goldman, Cecil County Division of Planning and Zoning  
Shawn Kiernan, Maryland Department of Transportation  
Quinn Krenzel, Town of Elkton Planning  
Matthew Rodgers, New Castle County Department of Land Use

**TAC Ex-Officio Members present:**

Jasmine Champion, U.S. Federal Highway Administration

**TAC Members absent:**

City of Wilmington Planning  
City of Wilmington Department of Public Works  
Delaware Division of Small Business, Development, and Tourism  
Delaware Transit Corporation  
Delaware River and Bay Authority  
Maryland Department of the Environment  
Maryland State Highway Administration

**TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:**

Amtrak  
Diamond State Port Corporation  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

**Guests and Invitees:**

Marco Boyce, New Castle County  
Mike Campbell, Project Manager, WRA  
Tim DeSchepper, Town of Middletown  
Dan Janousek, MDOT  
Pam Keeney, DNREC, AQS member  
Tina Merrill, DNREC, AQS Member

**Staff:**

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner

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

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Espinal.

### **3. MINUTES**

Approval of the October 17, 2024, TAC Meeting Minutes.

**ACTION:** On motion by Mr. David Dahlstrom and seconded by Ms. Samantha Bulkilvish, the October 17th, 2024, TAC Minutes are approved.

### **4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

None.

### **5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

None.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

None.

### **PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

#### **6. Newport River Trail**

Mr. Marco Boyce from New Castle County introduced the Newport River Trail project, emphasizing its significance and progress. Joining him in the presentation was Mr. Mike Campbell of Whitman, Requardt & Associates (WRA), the project manager for this endeavor. Mr. Boyce highlighted that the county has secured substantial funding from the federal RAISE grant program for the project's construction and noted that it is nearing the completion of the design and permitting phases. He then handed over the presentation to Mr. Campbell.

Mr. Campbell, a landscape architect and head of active transportation planning at WRA, provided a comprehensive overview of the Newport River Trail project. He outlined the scope and landscape of the Newport River Trail is a proposed two-mile shared-use path designed to connect the town of Newport at St. James Street to downtown Wilmington via the James A. Markell Trail (commonly known as the JAM Trail). This trail aims to provide a safe, low-stress route for pedestrians and bicyclists, addressing the high-stress conditions currently experienced along Maryland Avenue, the main corridor linking Newport to Wilmington.

Mr. Campbell shared historical background as he emphasized that discussions about a pedestrian and bicycle connection between Newport and Wilmington began over a decade ago. In 2014, during Mr. Boyce's tenure at DeIDOT, alternatives were explored, and the Newport

River Trail was identified as the most direct and impactful route, albeit with significant challenges. In 2018, DelDOT's Blueprint for a Bicycle-Friendly Delaware and New Castle County's Connecting Communities Initiative reinforced the importance of this project as a key component of the regional trail network. The trail's alignment crosses sensitive environmental areas, including tidal and non-tidal wetlands, migratory fish habitats, and the Christina River. It must also navigate around critical infrastructure, such as New Castle County's primary sewer line and the Amtrak Northeast Corridor. Coordination with property owners, including Harvey Hanna, has been pivotal. The design includes narrowing Water Street's travel lanes to accommodate a shared-use path, elevated boardwalk structures to address floodplain challenges, and simplified railings to enhance future maintenance for the county. In addition, Mr. Campbell informed that a public meeting held in May 2023 gathered valuable input. While there were concerns about environmental impacts, attendees expressed support for amenities such as wayfinding signage, interpretive displays, and gateway treatments.

The project's final design is fully funded through state bond bill allocations. Additionally, New Castle County secured \$23 million in construction funding via the RAISE grant, marking a unique achievement as the funds flow directly to the county rather than DelDOT. Construction is expected to commence in 2025, with a duration of 18 to 24 months due to the project's complexity. Future steps include, the project team will continue coordinating with environmental agencies, securing easements, and addressing utility relocations. Updates will be posted on the project website, including recordings of public meetings.

The presentation concluded with an invitation for questions, during which Mr. Dave Gula commended the team for their efforts and suggested presenting the project to the PAC on December 16th. Both Mr. Boyce and Mr. Campbell acknowledged the suggestion and expressed interest in further engagement opportunities.

## **7. MD Route 272 Corridor Transportation Plan**

Mr. Bill Swiatek presented an overview of the planning request submitted by Cecil County as part of the UPWP. The lead consultant for this initiative is Wallace Montgomery. The plan focuses on a corridor extending from just north of I-95 on Route 272 near Cecil College southward past US 40 into the Town of North East and slightly beyond.

The steering committee overseeing this project is diverse and continues to grow. Members include representatives from the town of North East, Cecil County departments, the County Chamber of Commerce, local schools, Maryland DOT, the State Highway Administration (SHA), local police, the Yacht Club, Elk Neck State Park, East Coast Greenway, Bike Maryland, and the 911 Trail Alliance. The consultant working on the Town's Comprehensive Plan update is also part of the committee, supporting coordination between plans.

The project follows a phased planning approach. The existing conditions phase has been completed, including a land use and traffic conditions report, now available on the study's webpage. Currently, the project is in the visioning phase, with an active survey receiving approximately 130 responses so far and a public workshop recently concluded. Upcoming phases include outreach to local youth, technical analysis integration, and drafting recommendations by spring. Final recommendations will be selected in early summer.

Mr. Swiatek provided detail description of the study area, home to about 11,600 people, includes the town of North East and features diverse land use types, ranging from rural to suburban to urban settings. Four corridor segments were identified for analysis:

**Segment 1 (I-95 to Cecil College)**

- Four-lane divided roadway with an ADT of 21,000, including 10% truck traffic.

**Segment 2 (I-95 to US 40)**

- Two-lane undivided roadway with bike lanes, an ADT of 22,000, and 2,000 trucks. This segment experiences congestion due to businesses such as FedEx Freight and Walmart.

**Segment 3 (Downtown North East)**

- Two-lane undivided road with bike lanes, on-street parking, and an ADT of 14,000. Downtown features a mix of land uses and activities.

**Segment 4 (South of North East)**

- Two-lane undivided roadway with an ADT of 2,000. Concerns include speeding and potential impacts of new development.

The corridor includes critical biodiversity areas, particularly near North East Creek and River. These areas, designated as Tier 1 through Tier 5 in terms of environmental significance, require careful consideration in recommendations.

Mr. Bill Swiatek emphasized the functional classifications of MD Route 272 as a minor arterial, intersecting with principal arterials such as US 40 and I-95. The corridor also features transit and non-motorized facilities, including sidewalks, trails, and the East Coast Greenway. Gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, particularly in the northern corridor, need addressing. Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress varies, with higher stress on main roads and lower stress in residential areas. Traffic volumes peak in the middle corridor segment, with seasonal increases of 10-17%, particularly near the Town of North East. Speeding is a significant issue, notably south of the town. Crash data from 2000-2023 shows clusters near US 40 and I-95, including 29 crashes with six injuries at US 40 and Route 272.

Mr. Swiatek mentioned several projects in the area that are part of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or the Long-Range Plan, including East Coast Greenway Phase 1 and 2 implementation, I-95 expansion from the Susquehanna River to the Delaware line, improvements to Route 272 between US 40 and Lums Road. Other aspirational projects include a North East transit hub and train station, the Rolling Road Bridge replacement, and intersection traffic calming. Coordination with the town's comprehensive plan update and a bikeways trail design grant ensures alignment across planning efforts.

Mr. Swiatek explained that a public workshop was held at the North East Library with about 50 attendees. Participants actively engaged in map-based activities, sharing ideas and feedback. The project's webpage provides access to the survey and further information, encouraging community involvement. For updates and engagement opportunities, visit the website at [www.wilmapco.org/272](http://www.wilmapco.org/272).

Mr. Dahlstrom inquired about a prior Route 40 safety study, which he recalled participating in many years ago. He asked whether the study, particularly its recommendations related to the intersection at Maryland Route 272, was being considered or if any of those recommendations were currently in the pipeline. Mr. Swiatek responded that he could not provide a specific answer at that moment but acknowledged the importance of the inquiry. He stated that he would verify the information to ensure it is included in the tasks assigned to the consultants.

Mr. Kiernan noted that the Task 1 report was available on the website and asked if the presentation given during the meeting could also be accessed. Mr. Swiatek stated that he could email the presentation and directed Mr. Kiernan to a "Meeting Materials" section on the project's website, where relevant documents are posted.

## **8. Environmental and Transportation Justice Analysis**

Mr. Bill Swiatek presented an update on the Transportation Justice Plan and Title VI Report at WILMAPCO. He began by noting that the last major update to the Transportation Justice Plan occurred in 2019, with several studies conducted since then to build on its foundation. The Transportation Justice (TJ) initiative at WILMAPCO serves as an umbrella plan that incorporates federal requirements, including Title VI compliance, environmental justice, language assistance planning, the ADA self-evaluation, and work on mobility-challenged populations. Mr. Swiatek emphasized that consolidating these requirements into a single document enhances efficiency, improves public awareness, and ensures Council members stay informed on interconnected equity issues.

The plan includes distinct chapters for Title VI requirements, low-income and racial/ethnic minority equity analysis, a language assistance plan, ADA self-evaluation, and mobility-challenged populations. This organization ensures compliance with federal regulations while addressing specific community needs.

Mr. Swiatek shared the Equity Analysis focuses on addressing the needs of low-income and racial ethnic minority groups. This section incorporates a demographic profile, results from a regional public opinion survey, spatial analyses, public engagement reviews, and key recommendations. It also emphasizes disparities such as limited transportation access to essential resources like groceries, employment, and medical care, which disproportionately affect low-income and minority populations.

The Mobility Challenged Analysis examines the unique transportation needs of specific populations, including seniors, persons with disabilities, zero-car households, and, newly included in this update, young people. It employs similar methods as equity analysis, featuring demographic profiles, public opinion data, and spatial analyses.

The Language Assistance Plan addresses the needs of individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP), low literacy, and those who are digitally disadvantaged, a newly identified group in this update. This section builds on findings from the 2020 "urban technology deserts" analysis to better understand and address the needs of digitally disadvantaged populations.

Mr. Swiatek emphasized that EJ Neighborhoods are identified based on residential concentrations of low-income and minority groups. The data for this section is drawn from census information, supplemented by housing value and subsidized housing data. Adjustments are made to exclude non-residential areas, regions with high adult student populations, and areas with very small household counts.

Mr. Swiatek highlighted key findings from public opinion surveys and data analyses. For example, transportation access disparities are a critical issue: 20% of households earning under \$25,000 reported difficulty accessing healthy and affordable groceries due to transportation challenges, compared to 9% of households in the region overall. Similarly, 16% of households earning under \$50,000 noted challenges in accessing routine medical care, compared to only 2% of those earning over \$100,000.

Spatial and demographic trends were also explored. Concentrations of minority groups, including Black, Hispanic, and Asian populations, were mapped using 2020 census data. Adjustments for regions with high adult student populations provided a clearer understanding of poverty trends in areas such as Newark. Mr. Swiatek explained how EJ neighborhood data informs the prioritization of projects and outreach efforts. For instance, during the Route 272 planning process, targeted outreach, such as postcard mailings, was utilized to attempt to engage EJ communities more effectively.

Mr. Swiatek outlined the next steps sharing the plan's equity analyses will soon be completed, including a regional connectivity analysis that evaluates accessibility to key destinations such as medical centers and grocery stores. Findings from additional sections, such as the mobility-challenged analysis and language assistance plan, will be presented at future TAC meetings. A meeting of the Transportation Justice Working Group is also scheduled to gather feedback on the methodology and findings. The final plan is expected to be presented for Council endorsement in September 2025.

Mr. Swiatek concluded the presentation by inviting participants to join the Transportation Justice Working Group and stay informed about the initiative's progress. No further questions or comments were discussed.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **9. Staff Report**

Ms. Heather Dunigan reported the following updates:

- On October 28th, the third and final Public Workshop for the Claymont Area Master Plan took place.
- On October 29-30th, the FHWA Peer Exchange event was held which was an opportunity for networking and improving processes between agencies.
- On November 8th, the Maryland 272 Corridor Plan Steering Committee held its latest meeting.
- On November 12th, the Wilmington Initiatives met to discuss the 2nd Street Road Diet Project, though no clear path forward was identified.
- On November 14th, the Kirkwood Highway Land Use and Transportation Draft Recommendations Workshop took place.
- On November 14th, the Council meeting was held, and two TIP amendments were approved: one for the Elkton MARC Station project and another for DelDOT adjustments to ensure financial constraint with CTP. The Council also approved project prioritization for the Delaware Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Program application.
- On November 18th, a meeting was held for the Concord Pike Corridor Master Plan Monitoring Committee, conducted jointly with the Rocky Run Underpass Feasibility Study Advisory Committee.
- On November 19th, a public workshop for the Maryland 272 Corridor Plan was held.
- On November 20th, Staff participated in a career day development activity with University of Delaware public health students.
- On November 21st, the Route 9 Corridor Master Plan Monitoring Committee met.
- On November 26th, a presentation on Transportation Justice (TJ) work will be given to the University of Washington Health and Sustainability Transportation class.
- On December 2nd, the Ardens Transportation Plan Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On December 2nd, a site visit for the Augustine Cutoff Reconfiguration Study will take place, with DTC providing a bus for safe corridor transportation.

- On December 10th, the next Churchman's Crossing Plan Monitoring Committee meeting will be held. Two upcoming studies from NCHRP will be discussed: The impacts of e-commerce on travel and land use pattern and cross-jurisdictional cyber resilience in TSMO programs.

Lastly the next TAC meeting will be held in person, followed by a lunch to celebrate the holiday season and mark the transition of a team member from full-time to almost retirement.

### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

Ms. Tigist Zegeye, WILMAPCO's Executive Director, announced that Ms. Heather Dunigan, a long-standing and highly valued team member, will be retiring in January. However, she shared the good news that Ms. Dunigan will continue contributing to WILMAPCO in a part-time capacity. Ms. Zegeye expressed her heartfelt gratitude for all that Ms. Dunigan has accomplished for the organization over the years. Reflecting on their shared history, she noted that Ms. Dunigan began her journey at WILMAPCO as an intern during the organization's early days.

Ms. Zegeye remarked on how much Ms. Dunigan will be missed but emphasized the positive aspect of her ongoing part-time involvement. She concluded by inviting committee members to share their thoughts and informed them that more details would be forthcoming about Ms. Dunigan's retirement celebration.

Mr. Bowers extended his congratulations to Ms. Dunigan, stating that her departure, even on a part-time basis, was bittersweet. He expressed immense gratitude for her contributions to various initiatives, including the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and bicycle and pedestrian projects. Mr. Bowers described her work as impactful and shared that she will be greatly missed, while reiterating his deep appreciation for her dedication over the years.

Ms. Dunigan thanked everyone for their kind words and assured the group that she would remain actively involved in WILMAPCO's project work, albeit in a reduced capacity. She explained that responsibilities for several key areas, such as the TIP, would transition to other planners, including Jake, who will take a more prominent role. She emphasized her continued engagement with community projects and reiterated her commitment to WILMAPCO's mission.

Mr. Dahlstrom offered his congratulations to Ms. Dunigan, reflecting on their 12 years of collaboration. He commended her outstanding work, emphasized the pleasure of working together, and noted how much she will be missed.

Mr. Boyce also congratulated Ms. Dunigan, expressing surprise at her decision to step back but gratitude for the opportunity to work with her. He shared his appreciation for her consistent dedication throughout his own career transitions, from the private sector to DeIDOT. He wished her the best as she heads into this next chapter and thanked her for her contributions to WILMAPCO.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

**ACTION:** Meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

**Attachments (0)**