

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
February 20, 2025

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on Thursday, February 20, 2025, at WILMAPCO, 100 Discovery Boulevard, Suite 800, Newark, DE 19713 and via video conference/conference call.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Michael Fortner, from the City of Newark, brought the TAC meeting to order at 10:04 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
Catherine Salarano, Maryland Department of the Environment
Catherine Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation

TAC Ex-Officio Members present:

TAC Members absent:

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

TAC Ex-Officio Members absent:

Amtrak
Diamond State Port Corporation
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Federal Highway Administration
U.S. Federal Transit Administration

Guests and Invitees:

Anna Batista, MDOT, SHA- Consultant
Pam Keeney, DNREC, AQS member
Toria Lassiter, MDOT, SHA
Tina Merrill, DNREC, AQS member
Adam Streight, Cecil County Executive

Staff:

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner
Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
Elizabeth Espinal, Administrative Assistant

Dave Gula, Principal Planner
Jake Thompson, Principal Planner
Dawn Voss, Outreach Coordinator
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Espinal.

3. MINUTES

Approval of January 16, 2025, TAC Meeting Minutes.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. David Dahlstrom and seconded by Mr. Shawn Kiernan, January 16, 2025, TAC Minutes are approved.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Mr. Dave Gula provided an update on the Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group which met on February 4 with 13 attendees and received two presentations.

The first presentation, delivered by Maria Andaya, provided an update on the Pedestrian Action Plan. It addressed the increasing number of pedestrian fatalities in Delaware and reviewed the history of pedestrian safety initiatives in the state. The discussion covered the development of a pedestrian network model and the potential integration of a pedestrian level of traffic stress metric. Attendees shared numerous comments on pedestrian crossings, newly implemented pedestrian barriers, and risky behaviors exhibited by both pedestrians and drivers.

The second presentation focused on the feasibility of a pathway underpass at the Rocky Run culvert on Concord Pike. This initiative originates from the Concord Pike Master Plan and has been advanced by the Concord Pike Monitoring Committee. While the project is still under review by the Technical Committee, a public workshop held on February 10 received strong attendance. Participants included pedestrian advocates and local residents who expressed a strong interest in safer crossings along Concord Pike. The project has been generally well received.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ms. Tina Merrill made a comment regarding the WILMAPCO TIP amendment form. She noted that while she was unsure if she was considered a member of the public, she wanted to provide feedback. She acknowledged the fast pace of meetings and referred to an action item regarding the TIP amendment form sent out earlier in the week. Ms. Merrill stated that DNREC would like WILMAPCO to consider adding more information to the form to assist multiple staff members reviewing amendments. Specifically, she requested greater transparency in financial increases and clarification on whether changes result from supply costs or other factors. She emphasized that while formal concurrence may not always be required, additional details would ensure all staff members remain informed and aligned.

Ms. Tigist Zegeye responded, expressing appreciation for Ms. Merrill's feedback. She confirmed that the TIP amendment form is currently undergoing revisions to incorporate necessary updates, including improvements to project descriptions. She acknowledged that the descriptions have historically lacked detail and assured the group that efforts are underway to enhance clarity and transparency in future versions of the form.

Ms. Heather Dunigan added that once a draft of the revised form undergoes internal staff review, she would share it with Ms. Merrill and others before finalization to ensure all stakeholders are comfortable with the proposed changes. Ms. Merrill expressed appreciation for the opportunity to review the draft and agreed that the updates would save time for all involved.

ACTION ITEMS

6. To recommend amendment of the FY2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)- Mr. Jake Thompson reported that DelDOT has requested an amendment to the FY 2025 to 2028 TIP to increase funding for the I-95 and SR896 Interchange project. Last amended in November 2024, this project has a total funding of \$173.901 million. This proposed amendment will increase that funding to \$189.06 million, and that's a total increase of \$15.158 million dollars.

ACTION: On motion by Ms. Catherine Smith and seconded by Mr. Matthew Rodgers, the TAC recommends amending the FY2025-2028 TIP.

7. To recommend amendment of the FY2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)- Mr. Jake Thompson reported that DelDOT has requested an amendment to the FY 2025 to 2028 TIP to increase funding for the US40 and SR896 improvements project, which was last amended in November 2024. The project currently has a total funding allocation of \$2.882 million. The proposed amendment would increase this funding to \$7.882 million, representing a total increase of just under \$5 million.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Matthew Rogers and seconded by Mr. David Dahlstrom, the TAC recommends amending the FY2025-2028 TIP.

8. To recommend approval of the Technical Scoring for Project Prioritization for the 2025 New Castle County Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)-

Mr. Jake Thompson presented the TAP submissions from New Castle County, along with the prioritization scores for those projects. A call for new projects in New Castle County was issued, and submissions were accepted through February 14. An additional call for projects in Cecil County is planned for the spring. TAP is a set-aside program within the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program, requiring a minimum 20% funding match. The program funds pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects, with eligible activities listed on [WILMAPCO's website](#).

Each submission underwent a prioritization process based on transportation criteria, with projects earning points for factors such as proximity to bus stops, designated bicycle routes, existing greenways, high-crash areas, abandoned railway corridors, or for closing gaps in pedestrian and bicycle networks. Additional points were awarded for locations near community centers, schools, parks, municipalities, historic elements, or areas with high population and employment density, EJ neighborhoods, or residential Black concentrations.

Mr. Thompson presented the New Castle County TAP Submissions and Prioritization Scores, and these five projects were submitted and ranked based on prioritization criteria:

1. Adams Street Sidewalk Improvements (23 points) – Ranked 1st

- Location: Adams St. from 6th St. to Delaware Ave., Wilmington

- Scope: Sidewalk replacement, ADA upgrades, traffic calming measures, intersection improvements, and minor landscaping

2. Ardens State Roads Crossing Improvements (18 points) – Ranked 2nd

- Location: Harvey Rd. and Veale Rd., Ardens
- Scope: Enhancing pedestrian crossings identified in the Ardens Transportation Plan, improving connections to the village’s off-road path network
- Funding Use: Community outreach, preliminary engineering, and design for up to six crossing locations
- Recommendation: Approval contingent upon receiving support letters from the Villages of Ardencroft and Ardentown

3. Northern Salem Church Road Corridor Improvement Plan (15 points) – Ranked 3rd

- Location: Salem Church Road, from SR 4 to Chapman Road
- Scope: New sidewalks, crosswalks, and left-turn lanes to improve access to the Islamic Society of Delaware and the Delaware Saegerbund and Library Association

4. Commons Blvd. Pathway Phase 2 (13 points) – Ranked 4th

- Location: Along a two-mile alignment from South SR 141 to Old Airport Rd.
- Scope: Construction of a 10-foot-wide asphalt path

5. City of New Castle Delaware River Trail (Petty Path) (12 points) – Ranked 5th

- Location: Business Park to the City of New Castle
- Scope: Riverfront trail with lighting and a potential scenic overlook

Mr. David Dahlstrom commended Mr. Thompson for the information provided and inquired whether there was sufficient funding for all five projects or if a cutoff would be necessary. Ms. Tigist Zegeye explained that after the prioritization process is completed and adopted by the Council, the rankings are submitted to DeIDOT. DeIDOT then conducts statewide prioritization and determines the available funding for selected projects. She noted that while there is a set-aside for New Castle County due to its designation as a TMA, NCC projects also compete for statewide funding.

Ms. Dunigan clarified that, in addition to regional TAP funding allocations, there is a statewide pool of TAP funds that can be used anywhere. However, she noted that there may not be enough funding available to support all five submitted projects, as this request falls outside the regular funding cycle. The decision to proceed with an off-cycle funding request was made to prevent the loss of any unobligated TAP funds within the current FY. She emphasized that this approach ensures an adequate number of projects are ready for funding consideration. Additionally, she confirmed that another call for projects will occur during the regular funding cycle in late summer or early fall.

Ms. Bulkilvish inquired about the Adams Street project, specifically referencing the application, which indicated that the City of Wilmington did not provide the required 20% match. She asked for clarification on how the project remains eligible if the match is not met.

Ms. Dunigan explained that certain TAP project categories do not require a federal match, and it is possible that the City of Wilmington expects the project to qualify under one of those exemptions. However, she stated that further discussion would be necessary if the project moves forward. She also noted that the Adams Street project is already part of an ongoing TAP initiative and is nearing completion of its design phase. Given its status, the project is effectively in the queue for implementation, aligning with WILMAPCO's commitment to funding TAP projects through completion.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Matthew Rogers and seconded by Ms. Catherine Smith, the TAC recommends approval of the proposed Technical Scoring for Prioritization of the 2025 New Castle County Transportation Alternatives Program.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

9. Maryland Biennial Performance Report Update

Ms. Anna Batista, representing MDOT State Highway Administration (SHA), provided an update on performance measures and related developments. Ms. Batista began with a brief overview of TPM, noting that safety performance targets are set annually, while infrastructure condition and system performance measures follow a biennial reporting cycle. The most recent biennial report was submitted in the fall of 2023. The federal performance management framework includes measures for safety, bridge and pavement conditions, reliability, congestion, and emissions, with states and MPOs responsible for setting targets. The second four-year performance period began in 2022 and is now in its final year, with the next round of target setting scheduled for 2026 or early 2027.

The mid-period performance report was recently completed, requiring states to submit their progress on two-year targets to the FHWA. Additionally, states have the option to adjust their four-year targets at this stage. MPOs must decide whether to continue supporting state targets, including adjustments, or establish independent regional targets.

Ms. Batista shared that new safety targets were established in August 2023 with the Highway Safety Improvement Program report. Statewide trends were presented, comparing current targets to those from the previous year. Safety performance is measured using five-year averages. While these targets apply at the state level, MPOs must decide whether to adopt them or establish regional targets based on localized data.

Ms. Batista emphasized that the biennial performance report submitted on October 1, 2023, included updates on infrastructure conditions, reliability, and congestion:

- **Pavement and Bridge Conditions:** All targets were met.
- **Reliability:** Two out of three targets were achieved. Interstate reliability narrowly missed the target, reflecting ongoing post-pandemic traffic trends.
- **Congestion:** Most targets were met, but Aberdeen's peak hour excessive delay increased beyond the expected level.

Regarding non-single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel, data reporting has been impacted by changes in the Census Bureau's urbanized area boundaries. The FHWA decided to maintain baseline data from 2021 rather than update it with new boundary definitions, ensuring consistency in performance comparisons. MPOs may update their own data if they choose, though it would differ from the federal dashboard.

Ms. Batista explained that MDOT made several adjustments to performance targets based on mid-period data:

- **Bridge Condition:** The target for bridges in poor condition was slightly adjusted from 2.2% to 2.4% due to funding constraints that may limit further improvements.
- **Reliability:** Interstate system reliability has been declining since the COVID-19 pandemic. The collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge further impacted on congestion, prompting adjustments to targets to reflect the new traffic patterns.
- **Congestion:** The Baltimore MPO and MDOT collaborated on adjustments for the Aberdeen and Baltimore urbanized areas. The Philadelphia MPO opted for a more ambitious non-SOV travel target, though it may not meet the final goal based on federal reporting rules.

Ms. Batista added that MPOs must finalize their decisions on supporting state safety targets by February 27, 2024. The deadline for decisions on biennial performance targets is March 30, 2024. Ms. Batista advised that any questions or requests for additional information should be directed to MDOT-SHA representatives, including Toria Lassiter.

10. Augustine Cut Off Corridor Bike/Ped Improvements Study

Mr. Dave Gula provided an overview of the ongoing Augustine Cut-Off project, offering insights into its progress and future direction. The update included a recap of previous discussions with the advisory committee and an outline of the study's objectives and methodology.

Mr. Gula shared that the Augustine Cut-Off study focuses on a corridor that spans both New Castle County and the City of Wilmington. The project team initiated the process with an advisory committee consisting of key stakeholders, including institutional representatives and a strong contingent of area residents. Given that this initiative builds upon a prior project, the advisory committee plays a crucial role in ensuring comprehensive input from corridor users. The advisory committee is tasked with providing feedback, answering questions, and contributing insights throughout the study process. However, it does not function as a decision-making body. Instead, its primary objective is to facilitate consensus on recommendations by engaging stakeholders and gathering diverse perspectives.

Mr. Gula emphasized that the Augustine Cut-Off serves as a key connection between U.S. Route 202 near the Blue Ball Barn and Lovering Avenue in Wilmington. The study aims to assess transportation conditions along the corridor, addressing multiple transportation modes to enhance overall safety and accessibility.

Although the study officially falls under the FY 2025 budget, its completion is anticipated to extend into FY 2026 without requiring additional funding. The project is supported by Whitman, Requardt & Associates (WRA) as the consultant team. The advisory committee is scheduled to convene four times, with additional meetings planned for project partners and up to four public workshops, including one upcoming session.

Mr. Gula discussed key challenges and considerations. This study will evaluate multiple aspects of transportation along the corridor, with a particular focus on, such as:

- **Traffic Calming Measures:** Addressing high traffic speeds, which remain a significant concern.

- Stakeholder Engagement: Encouraging participation from all corridor users, particularly those who rely on walking and biking.
- Transit Accessibility: Enhancing connections to existing transit facilities while improving non-motorized transportation options.

Public involvement will be a cornerstone of the study. The project team is actively engaging elected officials, the advisory committee, and local residents to ensure widespread awareness and input. Outreach efforts extend beyond the immediate corridor to include surrounding neighborhoods in Wilmington.

Mr. Gula explained that in 2018, DeIDOT conducted a feasibility study focused on bicycle and pedestrian improvements along the corridor. This initiative was part of the Connecting Communities Initiative in New Castle County and was ranked as a top priority for study. The assessment, which commenced in FY 2022, primarily examined safety and efficiency concerns for non-motorized users.

The initial public workshop for the Phase 1 study attracted significant interest, with 74 attendees and a substantial number of survey responses and email comments. However, some corridor residents opposed potential modifications, citing a 2000 letter from a former Secretary of Transportation that suggested no roadway expansion would take place. Following legal review, it was determined that the letter was non-binding and did not preclude the proposed improvements. As a result, DeIDOT proceeded with the study while maintaining a commitment to avoiding right-of-way expansion.

Mr. Gula explained differences between Phase One and Phase Two, stating that Phase One of the study concentrated on bicycle and pedestrian enhancements south of Cantera Road, particularly below 18th Street. This phase included a new separated pathway over the Augustine Cut-Off Bridge and improved pedestrian crossings. As Phase One is nearing completion, Phase Two is now underway, focusing on key intersections such as Edgewood, Rock Manor Ave, Alapocas Drive, Cantera Road, and 18th Street. The primary objective is to create a safer and more accessible corridor for all transportation modes.

Overall, Mr. Gula emphasized that the study is incorporating a Safe Systems Approach, emphasizing:

- Speed Management: Addressing high-speed travel along the corridor, particularly in the downhill section leading into Wilmington.
- Traffic Control Measures: Implementing designs that encourage compliance with speed limits rather than relying solely on enforcement.
- Shared Responsibility: Enhancing roadway designs to promote safety for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.

Currently, speed limits on the corridor are posted at 35 mph in the northern section and 25 mph within the city limits. However, observed speeds often exceed these limits by 10 mph or more, creating safety risks. The natural downhill gradient toward Wilmington further contributes to excessive speeds, even among drivers who are not actively trying to speed.

Crash data indicates clusters of incidents at Alapocas Drive and Augustine Hills. While the corridor has recorded only one pedestrian fatality to date, concerns remain about high speeds and potential future incidents. The study aims to prevent further fatalities through targeted infrastructure improvements and speed management strategies.

Mr. Gula expressed that the project team will continue conducting technical analyses, including intersection control evaluations. The findings will be shared at the upcoming public workshop, scheduled for March 3rd at Salesianum School. Additionally, the advisory committee will meet following the workshop to review public feedback and discuss the next steps. Mr. Gula concluded that moving forward, the study will prioritize public engagement, data-driven decision-making, and infrastructure enhancements that promote safer, multimodal transportation along the Augustine Cut-Off corridor.

INFORMATION ITEMS

11. Staff Report

Ms. Tigist Zegeye reported the following updates:

- On February 10th, the Rocky Run Underpass Public Workshop was held, with approximately 33 attendees.
- On February 20th, Staff will participate in the Downes Elementary School Healthy Family Night.
- On February 24th, the Kirkwood Highway Land-Use and Transportation Plan will have its final recommendations workshop.
- On February 25th, the MD 272 Plan Steering Committee will meet.
- On February 25th, staff will participate in the Delaware MPOs and DOT Roundtable.
- On February 26th, the Newport Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On February 27th, the Wilmington Initiative meeting will be held.
- On March 3rd, the Ardens Transportation Plan Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On March 3rd, the first public workshop for the Augustine Cut-Off Reconfiguration Study will take place.
- On March 20th, the Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee will meet.
- On April 21st, the East Elkton Plan Monitoring Committee will meet.

Ms. Zegeye added that staff have been asked to join Delaware's Comprehensive Climate Action Plan Update's Transportation Core Team, which is responsible for developing transportation policy within the plan.

On another note, the DVRPC has postponed the development of the MSA Comprehensive Climate Action Plan due to concerns regarding the availability of federal funds, project staffing, and competing priorities. Updates will be provided as more information becomes available.

OTHER BUSINESS:

ADJOURNMENT:

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.

Attachments (0)