



Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization

P.O. Box 383, Dover, Delaware 19903

(302) 387-6030 FAX: (302) 387-6032

<http://doverkentmpo.org>

DOVER/KENT COUNTY MPO TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES OF APRIL 9, 2014

Technical Advisory Committee Representatives attending:

Mary Ellen Gray, Kent County Planning (Chair)
Dorothy Morris for David Edgell, Office of State Planning (Vice-chair)
Tim Riley, Kent Conservation District
Scott Koenig for Ann Marie Townshend, City of Dover, Planning & Insp.
Ralph Reeb for Michael Kirkpatrick, DelDOT Planning
Phil Wheeler, DNREC
Cathy Smith, Delaware Transit Corporation
Joe Zilcosky, DE Economic Dev. Office
Milton Melendez, DE Dept. of Agriculture
Aaron Chaffinch, Town of Camden
Marc Dixon, Federal Highway Administration

Members not attending:

Sharon Duca, City of Dover, Public Works
Rick Crawford, Norfolk Southern
City of Milford

Dave Hugg, Town of Smyrna
Ryan Long, Federal Transit Admin.
Jason Halpin, Dover Air Force Base

Non-members attending:

Bill Brockenbrough, DelDOT
Valerie Gray (TAC alternate), DNREC
James Galvin, MPO staff
Kate Layton, MPO Staff

Arshon Howard
Rich Vetter, MPO Executive Director
Chris Kirby, MPO Staff
Catherine Samardza, MPO Staff

- 1) Introduction of Members & Guests
- 2) Public Comments
- 3) ***ACTION ITEM:*** Approval of Agenda (enclosure)

MOTION By Mr. Wheeler to approve the agenda. Seconded by Mr. Riley. Motion carried.

- 4) ***ACTION ITEM:*** Approval of Minutes – February 12, 2014

MOTION By Mr. Riley to approve the minutes. Seconded by Mr. Chaffinch. Motion carried.

- 5) ***ACTION ITEM:*** FY 2015 Unified Planning Work Program – Rich Vetter

Mr. Vetter reviewed the projects in the FY2015 UPWP. The committee members discussed the Population and Employment Projections and the Delaware Population Consortium. Staff noted that the MPO is working with WILMAPCO on methodology to develop the new projections. Mr. Reeb noted that there is no mandate for the Population Consortium, but the State is required to use the figures the DPC develops as a starting point. Ed Ratledge at the University of Delaware has been developing those numbers for years, but he is retiring and there is no one in place to take over. He suggested that this was something the MPO leadership might address in the future at the next round of legislative action in September 2014. These numbers are used for travel demand forecasts. Ms. Gray said that the Office of State Planning is working on legislation to address this issue.

MOTION By Mr. Wheeler to recommend Council approve the FY2015 UPWP. Seconded by Ms. Smith. Motion carried.

- 6) ***ACTION ITEM:*** Metropolitan Transportation Plan Amendment - U.S. 13 Widening - Rich Vetter/Jim Galvin



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Mr. Vetter noted that the proposed US13 Widening project had been discussed in December, and a presentation given and further discussion occurred in February. The project was rescored for priority based on information from DelDOT, including "complete street" amenities and because it falls within an area of State Investment Strategies designated Level 1 (high growth area). Mr. Galvin directed the committee members to the materials sent out by mail, to the sheet explaining the rationale behind the change in scoring. Mr. Reeb asked if this project would trigger a air quality conformity determination; Mr. Vetter said it would not, because Delaware is currently in conformity. Mr. Wheeler said there would be a new standard in 2015, so it would be helpful to model this project anyway, to "keep ahead of the game." He said that this project will raise the VMT projections.

Mr. Wheeler further said that he was prepared to vote "no" on this amendment. While he appreciated the presentation from DelDOT, he couldn't agree that the safety issue justified moving this project ahead of others. In particular, other project to reduce VMT would not happen because of the money going to this one project. Mr. Reeb said that the vote would be taken on fact and good estimates, but admitted that a model had not been run on the project, and that getting some sense of the VMT change would be a good idea. Mr. Zilcosky asked if there were any other ideas other than adding lanes; Mr. Reeb responded with telecommuting, changing work hours, encouraging people to ride bikes, but added that the State could propose a lot, but people can do what they want with their money and their time.

Mr. Reeb added that wishing it away isn't going to cut it, and voting "no" is not going to change the traffic congestion and we rely on the folks that have studied traffic safety for a living. He said that he wouldn't be in a position to say that what they're proposing will make it less safe or more safe but it's based upon the research that's been done nationally. He also said that doubling transit and transit ridership and increasing bicycle riders by 4,000% wouldn't make a dent in the problem.

There was further discussion concerning alternate measures. Mr. Reeb said that Travel Demand Forecasting was just that, a forecast. Ms. Smith said this was part of the reason why DTC is doing a US13 study. There was discussion of bus-only lanes, with the conclusion that it wouldn't work on US13 because of all the stops necessary. Mr. Koenig noted that the reality is that Delaware is growing, and growing by cars. He also said he was dumbfounded by the fact Delaware has an air quality problem and that cities like Dallas TX and Los Angeles can build superhighways and yet the TAC was talking about adding less than 25 feet to US13. He said it seemed silly to talk about the same things over and over again. He said Delaware has been here before and they magically tweak the numbers and are in back in compliance. Mr. Wheeler still had concerns about adding lanes now and ten years down the road needing more lanes again.

MOTION By Mr. Koenig to recommend Council adopt the US 13 widening project amendment to the MTP.
Seconded by Mr. Chaffinch. Motion carried with seven voting "yes;" two voting "no" (Ms. Gray/Kent County and Mr. Wheeler/DNREC); and one abstention (Ms. Morris/Office of State Planning).

Ms. Gray noted Kent County was on the record in prior meetings that from the planning studies they have reviewed, adding lanes did not necessarily address congestion. She said she understood the science behind the idea and engineering, but that in other jurisdictions adding lanes does not always address the congestion issue. She also expressed concern about the amount of money it would cost, potentially taking funding away from other important projects addressing quality of life, congestion and road functionality. In addition, the Kent County Comprehensive Plan focuses on bringing roads up to functional classification and believes that funding is better spent on those types of projects.

7) ACTION ITEM: FY 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Jim Galvin

Mr. Galvin reviewed the draft TIP, noting that additional projects were added based on DelDOT's draft STIP. The project list was based on revenue from the proposed gas tax increase. The US13 widening project is in this TIP under the Hazard Elimination Program (HEP). There was discussion concerning approving a TIP that may have to be drastically amended after the General Assembly session. Mr. Galvin was asked what would happen if Council doesn't adopt the TIP; he reminded TAC members that the FY2014 TIP goes through FY2017 and could be left in place. He also noted that if there is no TIP in place, nothing can happen in Kent County. Discussion ensued concerning the fact that if there is less money available, there will be fewer projects. The additional proposed projects would again be pushed down the list. Ms. Gray commented that this was a place holder for the Bond Bill, providing a list of fundable projects. Mr. Dixon said that the TIP should be incorporated into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); DelDOT was doing this from the top down, from the STIP to the TIP.



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Mr. Zilcosky asked Ms. Gray how the County feels about the Thompsonville grade-separated intersection and the South Frederica grade-separated intersection; DelDOT had switched the projects, moving Thompsonville ahead of South Frederica. She noted that Kent County Levy Court has expressed concern over this change. Mr. Zilcosky asked if the MPO could change this; Mr. Galvin said that the MPO had created a document that reflected the CTP. Ms. Gray responded that the change was based on DelDOT's priority process, DecisionLens. Mr. Reeb said that the name meant nothing, it was a Delphi technique, and he commented on how the process uses factors such as traffic volume and crashes to determine priority.

He said that, as Mr. Dixon said, the TIP is supposed to be incorporated without change into the STIP. He also noted that it's the Delaware way, to start at the local level and build to the State strategy level.

Mr. Koenig noted that the Milford Thompsonville grade-separated intersection project has an MPO rating, but no State rating; and the South Frederica project has no MPO rating at all. He didn't understand why some projects have both pieces of information and some don't. Mr. Galvin said he thought that was something he had inadvertently left out. Mr. Vetter said that staff could update and revise those pages. Mr. Koenig said that South Frederica is a hotly contested project and didn't have an MPO priority. Mr. Galvin said that the MPO and DelDOT processes are not required to be the same, but ultimately the MPO is creating a document that reflects the STIP. The MPO priority ranking informs DelDOT as to the projects the MPO feels should be included in the STIP. Ms. Gray asked if he could go back and put in the rankings that the MPO has available where they are missing; he said he could.

MOTION By Mr. Koenig to recommend approval of the TIP with the inclusion of MPO rankings as available. Seconded by Mr. Melendez. Motion carried with one opposed (Mr. Wheeler, DNREC).

8) **ACTION ITEM: DelDOT/City of Dover Transportation Improvement District Agreement – Rich Vetter, T. William Brockenbrough/DelDOT**

Mr. Vetter and Mr. Brockenbrough reviewed this project and the MPO involvement. The agreement is between the City of Dover, DelDOT and the MPO and spells out the responsibilities for each participant. It will go to the City Council next month for review. Mr. Koenig reported that it had already been reviewed in committee, and had been moved forward to the consent agenda. The area identified for this project is the first to move forward; there are also areas in Sussex and New Castle being considered. Staff also noted that the framework agreement has no costs for the MPO. Committee discussion involved noting that this is a "work in progress." Ms. Gray asked if DelDOT was handling this "in-house;" Mr. Brockenbrough said that the project team included DelDOT staff and consultants.

MOTION By Mr. Koenig to recommend Council approve the Agreement. Seconded by Mr. Zilcosky. Motion carried.

9) **Discussion Item: Delaware State University Pedestrian Study - Rich Vetter**

Mr. Vetter reviewed the results of this study, including proposed landscaping and post-and-chain fencing to encourage pedestrians to use crossings at traffic signals, filling in sidewalk gaps and yearly monitoring to evaluate effectiveness.

10) **Member Agency Reports:**

City of Dover: The north Walmart property will be redeveloped into three spaces, including retail space and a restaurant, but the project is moving slowly. K-Mart has announced that it will be closing although no date has been disclosed.

Kent Conservation District: Mr. Riley reported that the storm water ordinance has been passed by Kent County Levy Court. Communities had expressed interest in participating prior to the Governor's proposed Clean Water tax; he was unsure how that would affect the program. He also noted that \$2M had been cut from an Agricultural program for winter cover crops, and the proposed water tax would cause higher costs for agricultural producers.

State of Delaware:

DTC: Ms. Smith reported that a public hearing would be held on 4/15/14 regarding service changes. Paratransit fares would



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increase on July 1, 2014. There is a task force meeting weekly with Secretary Bhatt to discuss viable options regarding paratransit. Ms. Smith also announced that Kennard Potts (MPO Council) would be retiring on June 1; his last day would be May 9th.

DNREC: Mr. Wheeler announced that he would be retiring on May 30th, and that Valerie Gray would be his replacement. He also announced that the open-burning ban would take effect again for the June-July-August season. He said that Kent County is in attainment and if this year is good it could possibly stay in attainment. However, the new three-year cycle will have a 75 parts per billion standard instead of the current 85.

11) Staff Report:

11.1 Outreach Activities – Kate Layton

11.2 UPWP Progress & Financial Reports – Rich Vetter

12) Next Meeting: June 11, 2014

MOTION By Mr. Koenig to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mr. Zilcosky. Motion carried.