

Journeys

The Newsletter of the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization

DOWNTOWN DOVER PARKING STUDY

Dover/Kent County MPO and City of Dover looking at spaces for all the right places



How much parking does downtown Dover need? The Dover/Kent County MPO is leading a parking study to answer that question.

The City of Dover requested the study in early 2016 and work began later in the year. The MPO and the City assembled a 10-member study group that includes stakeholders representing business, residential, municipal and other interests downtown.

MPO Executive Director Rich Vetter gave presentations about the study last fall to the MPO's Technical and Public Advisory committees, as well as in January to the MPO Council. Vetter said that the main scope of the study asks basic questions such as whether there is enough parking in downtown Dover, how to communicate locations of available parking to visitors, parking fee structures, whether a parking garage is needed, and if so, where to build one.

In December, Vetter and other study group members conducted



car counts at different parking areas downtown, studying 10 blocks of on-street parking and five lots containing off-street parking. The counts took into consideration parking occupancy, turnover and duration of parking time. The team

also interviewed business owners and area residents and visitors about downtown parking. Visitors, Vetter said, found some of the downtown parking confusing, as some spaces are free for two hours at a time, some spaces are metered and some parking lots are reserved for vehicles with special permits. Downtown Dover also could lose some parking spaces on Lockerman Street due to proposed construction.

The parking study not only examines problems, but is looking into solutions. Some ideas include reconfiguration of parking spaces, computerized parking meters similar to ones the City of Rehoboth Beach uses, agreements with private businesses and changes in parking policies. Talk of building additional parking lots and a parking garage is ongoing.

A public workshop about the study is tentatively planned for spring, and the study should be finished by this summer.

PAC News:

Seat changes on Public Advisory Committee

A few seats have changed on the Dover/Kent County MPO's Public Advisory Committee. Some members left the committee in 2016, and new ones came aboard.

Dwight Meyer, who had been a PAC member since 2003, retired from the MPO. Meyer served for a number of terms as PAC chairman, and was the committee's representative in agribusiness. In November, Kent County Levy Court appointed Bruce Snow to take Meyer's seat, and to serve as the PAC's new agribusiness representative.



Meyer

Snow is a lifelong Kent County resident who lives and works on the farm that has been in his family for more than a century as president of Snow Farms, Inc. He is a graduate of the University of Delaware, and lives on the farm with his wife and two sons. Snow has served as a supervisor on the Kent Conservation District since 2003 and as a member and chair of the Kent County Farm Service Agency committee.

Dover City Council appointee John Grady left the PAC in September. Grady, a longtime local attorney, served on the committee for a few months before vacating the seat.

MPO Council leadership to change

Committees hold annual elections

The Dover/Kent County MPO gives its best wishes to former MPO Council member and Levy Court Commissioner Brad Eaby.

In December, Eaby vacated his seat on Levy Court and the MPO Council when he accepted a job with the Delaware Department of Justice. Eaby had served several terms as chairman of the MPO Council, and was re-elected to the seat in November before leaving the post. Kent County Administrator Michael J. Petit deMange has since



Eaby

Delaware Transit Corporation's appointee, Carol Giesecke, left the PAC in June following her retirement from Delaware State University. In late November, DTC appointed Shane Breakie as its representative. Breakie is director of Energy Services for Chesapeake Utilities. Breakie has a bachelor's degree from the University of Delaware and an MBA from Wilmington College. Breakie, whose office is in Dover, has been with Chesapeake for more than 23 years. Breakie is active in a number of organizations in Kent County and statewide, including his service as vice chairman of the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Committee, and the Air Quality Partnership of Delaware.



Breakie

Finally, the PAC sends its best wishes to PAC member Jonathan Street. Street, who served on the PAC since October 2013, left the PAC in November due to family commitments.

Again the MPO welcomes all of its new members, gives best wishes to its outgoing members and thanks its existing members for continuing to serve on the Public Advisory Committee.

been appointed to represent Levy Court President P. Brooks Banta on the council. The MPO extends a warm welcome to its newest member. In January, council members agreed to hold a special election in March for a new chairman. Dover Mayor Robin R. Christiansen remains as the council's vice chairman.

Last fall, the Technical Advisory Committee and Public Advisory Committee held their annual elections for chair and vice chair. TAC members re-elected Mary Ellen Gray as chairman and David Edgell as vice chair of the committee. PAC members re-elected Mike Gumrot as their chair and Jayce Lesniewski as vice chair of the committee.

MPO Council approves long range plan

A new long-range plan for the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization has been approved. On Jan. 4, the MPO Council approved the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, called Vision 2040. The plan will next go to the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration for approval.

The MTP is one of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's core projects. The plan examines how central Delaware could take shape,

transportation-wise, over the next 23 years and how transportation projects in central Delaware will be funded. In addition, the MTP provides measurable goals for the region's transportation system.

The U.S. Department of Transportation requires the MPO to update its plan every four years as a prerequisite for federal funding.

A copy of Vision 2040 is available for view on the MPO's website, www.doverkentmpo.org.

MPO Council approves TIP amendments

North Street improvements added to West Dover Connector project

Three amendments to the MPO's FY 2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program have been approved. The MPO Council approved the amendments at its Jan. 4 meeting, pending public comment. A comment period for the proposed amendments began on Dec. 7, 2016, and ended on Jan. 6, 2017.

Two of the amendments were for the purchase of battery electric DART buses and the installation of charging stations for the buses. The third amendment approved additional cost to the construction contract for the POW-MIA Parkway (formerly known as the West Dover Connector). Although these are Delaware Department of Transportation projects and purchases, they include federal funding and meet the financial criteria for amendments to the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program.

The cost adjustment to the Parkway totals \$6 million -- from \$62 million to \$68 million. The added cost is for improvements to North Street, which is adjacent to one of the entrances to the Parkway. The improvements involve the patching of cracked or broken concrete sections, sealing smaller cracks, and finishing with an ultra-thin

hot-mix overlay on the existing pavement. The Parkway project is still on schedule and construction is expected to finish this summer.

DelDOT representative Mark Buckalew told the MPO Council that adding the cost for the North Street improvements to the Parkway project would be less costly and take less time than treating the improvements as a separate project.

The purchase of six, 35-foot zero-emission battery electric powered DART buses stems from a

FY 16 Federal Transit Administration

Low or No Emission Bus and Bus Facilities Grant that DTC was awarded.

The electric buses are meant to reduce emissions and provide clean, quiet expanded service in Kent County. These zero-emissions buses will be used to expand

fixed route services for Kent County in alignment with DTC's business plan. Total cost for the purchase is approximately \$5 million.

The five charging stations also stem from the federal grant that helped to pay for the buses. The Transit Corporation intends to buy three 500kW fast charging stations and two 50kW charging stations. Total cost for this project is approximately \$1.9 million.



SPOTLIGHT

Here's the plan:

Kent County's comprehensive plan in the works



Sarah Keifer and members of the Kent County Planning Services Department haven't started writing Kent County's new comprehensive plan. Right now, they're taking stock of information gleaned from months of public outreach and looking at how to weave the county's needs and the public's wishes into a blueprint for how the county will grow in the future.

In 2018, Kent County will have a new comprehensive plan. Kent County's Department of Planning Services started on the project in 2016.

A comprehensive plan is a vision for a community. It is a policy document, not an ordinance. Every municipality and county in Delaware is required to have a comprehensive plan, and to update that plan every 10 years. Comprehensive plans include physical, social and economic aspects of a community. Comprehensive plans also act as a framework to guide decision making by looking at what the goals and objectives are for the community and what are good strategies for implementation. Essential elements of a comprehensive plan include:

- Land Use
- Population and Demographics
- Agricultural Preservation
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Transportation

The county's new compre-

hensive plan will have these elements, Keifer and Assistant Planning Services Director Mary Ellen Gray said, but there will be some differences from the last plan which was approved in 2008.

"Functionally, what we're looking at is structure," Keifer said.

One of the differences the county will have this time around is less development pressure.

"There's a little more breathing room now," Keifer said.

In 2008, Delaware's real estate bubble was shrinking, but Kent County staff and officials were still processing the flood of large development proposals that had come during the early part of the decade. Farmers were selling their land to the highest bidder, and for a while it looked like houses would be the latest crop in mostly agricultural central Delaware. The influx of development placed more demand on public services and infrastructure. Now, Keifer and Gray said some farmers have bought back land and are keeping it rural.

"Certainly, the county is in a very different place than when we were working on the last [plan]," Keifer said.

The number of development projects in Kent County, however, is far fewer than eight years ago. A map of the county shows 4,111 lots have been taken off the books because they weren't built,

and more will be scrubbed if construction doesn't start soon. The map also shows 4,538 lots are under construction. There are still 105 lots pending in proposed subdivisions.

Even with a changed real estate market, growth is still in the public's mind, Keifer said. The public outreach process revealed a perception of a lot of growth, especially in northern Kent County. The county's population is still growing. Data from the Delaware Population Consortium shows that Kent County will have more than 180,000 people by the year 2020. By the year 2030, population could grow to more than 193,000.

In this plan, planners can look at the bigger picture for the county without the pressure to keep up with development demands. There will be more room for conversations about how the county should look and about quality of life than before.

"The difference is broader perspective," Keifer said. "Which actually makes planning more fun."

What this plan will show is the land usage links between residential and business areas, parks and recreation, transportation, agriculture and the whole, bigger picture for the county. Broader transportation choices could affect the next county plan. So far, the public has requested more transportation options, such as walking and

bicycling. People want sidewalks on both sides of the street in new developments, which the county already requires in new development proposals. Additionally, residents have asked for better ADA accessibility, which Keifer said was not expected. People also have mentioned traffic congestion in their comments.

“Wow, is that a theme,” Keifer said.

Keifer and Gray have been meeting with the Dover/Kent County MPO and with representatives from the Delaware Department of Transportation, as well as other stakeholders in area transportation. The MPO could provide some insight on Transportation Improvement

Districts.

An extensive public outreach started late last summer and ended in December for this phase of the department’s work on the comprehensive plan.

The planning department sent out surveys, held public workshops, created a social media page specifically for the new comprehensive plan and even created a mascot, Reggie the Rooster. During the workshops, the public placed stickers next to neighborhood or community features they preferred, and put play money into labeled boxes to indicate where wanted their tax dollars to be spent. Another exercise asked members of the public to design and sketch their

own development.

Public responses show there’s a focus on more than growth. Job creation is still an issue, but the county population also is aging, which further expands the wish list.

There’s still a lot to do between now and early 2018 when county staff will take its updated plan to Kent County Levy Court and state officials for approval. There will be another round of public outreach. Keifer and Gray hope to represent as much of the citizen input into the new plan as possible.

“It isn’t our plan, it’s the county’s plan, the community’s plan,” Keifer said. “The more we can use those voices, the more powerful it becomes.”

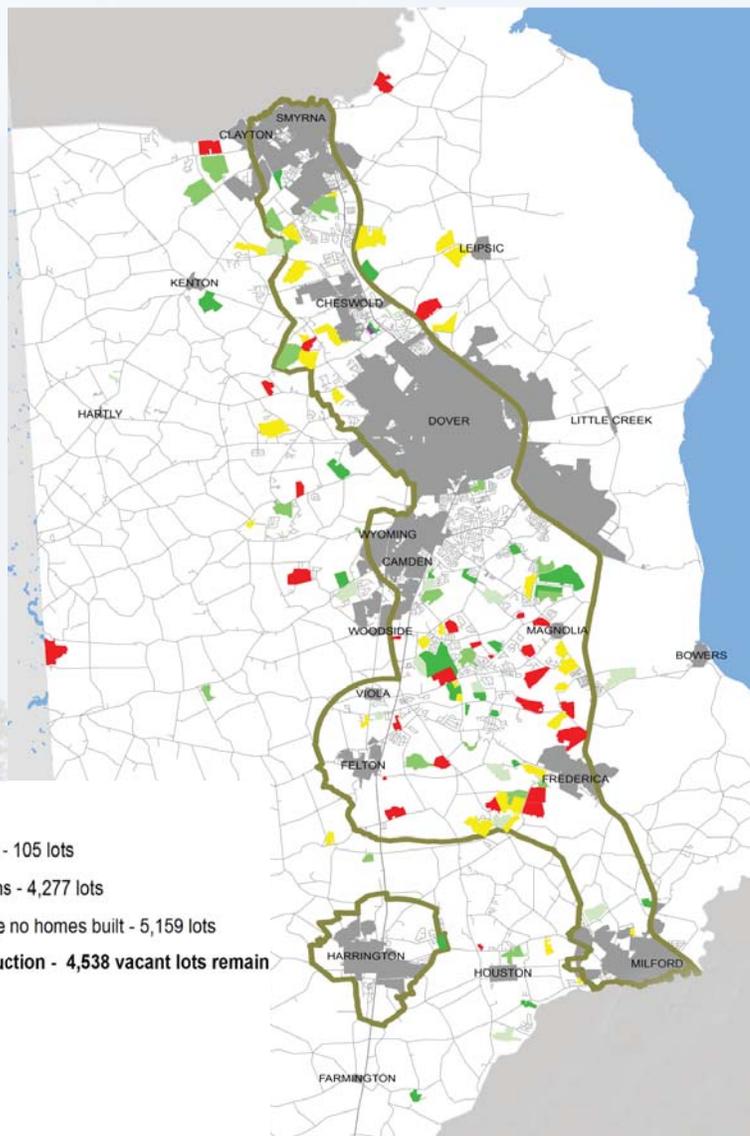
The general survey and first public comment period ended in December, but Keifer said the planning department would like to follow up with shorter surveys that focus in on more specific topics.

“To see what the top priorities really are,” Keifer said.

Following the second round of public outreach, the county will develop the final draft of the comprehensive plan this year, and will hold public hearings for this final draft in the spring or summer of 2018. The public can still visit the county’s Facebook page for information or to leave comments. The link for a follow-up survey is https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CompPlan_2.

Once approved in 2018, the county’s comprehensive plan will be good for 10 years, although the plan will have to be evaluated after five years. The plan is not just a 10 year plan, Keifer said, but one that looks 30-years ahead Kent County.

“And it’s meant to be an evolving document,” Keifer said.



Annual “Stuff the Bus” food drive collects 10.2 tons of goods for Delawareans in need



Lerrissa Boardely of DART shows food and other donated goods on a bus outside of the Acme grocery store in Dover. DART’s annual food drive collected more than 10 tons of goods for the Food Bank of Delaware this year.

More than 10 tons of collected food and goods will go to Delawareans in need, thanks to DART’s 19th annual “Stuff the Bus” Thanksgiving Food Drive. The food drive that ran from Nov. 7 to Nov. 12 collected 10.2 tons (20,414 pounds) of food and goods. Drop-off sites were at Walmart in Milford, Acme in Dover, Wilmington’s Rodney Square and the Acme grocery store at the

Fairfax Shopping Center, as well as the Newark Acme store. The Food Bank of Delaware will distribute the donated food through its Hunger Relief Partners to Delaware residents in need.

“We’re thrilled to hold the Stuff the Bus food drive each year,” said DTC’s Chief Executive Officer John Sisson. “Thanks to the impressive efforts of our employees, and the kindness and generosity of our riders and the public, it allows us to give back to the community and help Delawareans in need through the Food Bank of Delaware.”

This year’s donations of non-perishable food filled two 30-foot buses. Donations came from the general public, as well as businesses, schools, organizations, and state agencies throughout the entire state. Donors have come up with some creative ways to raise contributions, whether it’s a school that holds a friendly competition between classes or a homeowners association that donates the funds from their community garden.

The Delaware Transit Corporation, a subsidiary of the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), operates DART First State. For information on fixed route bus services statewide, please call 1-800-652-DART or visit www.Dart-FirstState.com.



DART adds service at Dover Air Force Base

Transportation options just opened up for Airmen and their families stationed at Dover Air Force Base.

On Jan. 5, officials from the Delaware Department of Transportation, Delaware Transit Corporation and Dover Air Force Base held a ribbon cutting for DART Route 106, which now includes service to the Base. DelDOT Sec. Jennifer Cohan, Delaware Transit Corporation Chief Executive Officer John Sisson and Dover Air Force Base Commander of the 436th Airlift Wing Col. Ethan Griffin, and other officials participated in the celebration of the expanded service.

“Today, we cut the ribbon on the new and improved Route 106 signifying the ongoing partnership between DART and the Dover Air Force Base,” Cohan said. “At DelDOT, we’re all about making connections, between employees and employers, customers and businesses, and members of the community. We’re proud to help the Dover Air Force Base improve its connections for the men and women who serve it.”

Conversations began in July 2015 between DAFB Leadership, DTC and the City of Dover to improve transportation options for Airmen. That year, during the long July 4 holiday weekend, several Airmen were not able to leave the base to experience local attractions due to the lack of transportation options.

“From there, this outstanding community moved forward and partnered to come up with the idea of this route,” Col. Griffin said. “Since that inception, Dover Air Force Base and the community have been in partnership to solve any and all problems that could come from a project that links the community with the Base. They worked to ensure that safety wasn’t compromised, the mission wasn’t compromised, and that our Airmen’s rights, or customer rights weren’t

compromised.”

DTC and DAFB representatives worked for 18 months through the First State Community Partnership Program Initiative to develop solutions encompassing the increase in ridership from the Base and a more attractive route with convenient times. Improvements to the Bus Route 106 were developed through extensive conversations with base leadership, as well as surveys of base personnel and Base Housing residents. The result is an improved route that will increase DART ridership by providing access to the local area for Airmen and their families, and DAFB lodging guests to create a positive economic impact for the community.



The new bus stops at DAFB are located at the Visitors Center, DAFB Housing and DAFB Housing Gate to accommodate DAFB Airmen in the dormitories, DAFB guests in lodging and DAFB families in base housing. The Visitors Center parking lot was renovated to accommodate a 35-foot DART bus and minimize traffic flow interruptions the DAFB Main Gate.

Route 106 has been streamlined for customer convenience, providing direct access to attractions along U.S. Route 13 between DAFB and the Scarborough Road Park & Ride. Stops in between these points include the Blue Hen Corporate Center, Luther Village Apartments, Capital Commons Shopping Center (formerly Kmart), Dover Downs Hotel & Casino and the Dover Mall. The route operates hourly from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Riders can connect to Route 107 at the Blue Hen Mall for service into downtown Dover and the Dover Transit Center.

“As a son whose father was stationed at Dover Air Force Base, I understand what it means to the men and women living on the Base to be able to connect with all that Dover has to offer.” Sisson said.

Dover/Kent County 2017 MPO Bi-Monthly Meeting Schedule

Technical Advisory Committee	Public Advisory Committee	MPO Council
		January 4, 2017
Feb. 8, 2017	Feb. 21, 2017	March 1, 2017
April 12, 2017	April 25, 2017	May 3, 2017
June 14, 2017	June 27, 2017 WORKSHOP	July 12, 2017
Aug. 9, 2017	Aug. 22, 2017	Sept. 13, 2017
Oct. 11, 2017	Oct. 24, 2017	Nov. 1, 2017
Dec. 13, 2017	December 13, 2017	Jan. 18, 2018

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