



# Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization

P.O. Box 383, Dover, Delaware 19903

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

<http://doverkentmpo.org>

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## DOVER/KENT COUNTY MPO COUNCIL JUNE 18, 2014 / FY2015-2018 TIP MEETING

### Dover/Kent MPO Council Members and /or Representatives thereof attending:

Commissioner Brad Eaby, for Brooks Banta, President, Kent County Levy Court, Acting Chair

Ann Marie Townshend, for Mayor David Bonar, City of Dover

Don Tinari, Mayor, Town of Cheswold, for Kent County Municipalities

John Sisson, Executive Director, Delaware Transit Corporation

Drew Boyce for Shailen Bhatt, Secretary, Delaware Dept. of Transportation

### Members not attending:

Terry Pepper, Dep. Dir., Safety & Homeland Security, for Governor Jack Markell, State of Delaware

Brigid Hynes-Cherin, Regional Administrator, Region III, Federal Transit Admin. (FTA)

Mary Ridgeway, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Admin. (FHWA)

### Non-members attending:

Shelly Cecchett, Greater Kent Committee

Bill Strickland, Greater Kent Committee

John Paradee, Greater Kent Committee

Cindy Small, Kent County Tourism

Earle Timpson, DelDOT

Rich Vetter, MPO Staff

Kate Layton, MPO Staff

Ed Dulin, Greater Kent Committee

Nash Childs, Greater Kent Committee

Scott Brown, Greater Kent Committee

Tom Kramedas, 19 Laurec Drive

Mike Gumrot, MPO PAC

James Galvin, MPO Staff

Catherine Samardza, MPO Staff

### 1. Introduction of Members & Guests

### 2. Public Comments

Mr. Gumrot introduced himself, noting his professional background and his five years on the MPO Public Advisory Committee (PAC). He said he felt that DelDOT got a lot of grief that was not deserved. He referenced the problems with the I-495 bridge, and DelDOT's shift of focus to New Castle County, but said that this issue (proposed FY2015-2018 TIP) was not less important. He referenced information previously noted regarding the Thompsonville and South Frederica intersections, and acknowledged DelDOT's safety concerns; however, he felt that with that the economic problems facing Kent County and Delaware, there had to be credibility for the Sports Complex. He felt that the weighting in DecisionLens – 30% safety, 3% economic – was now an issue for the Secretary of DelDOT, the Governor and the Secretary of Economic Development, until they sit down, no one else can change the decision. He did not see how another lengthy meeting of the MPO Council could change anything.

Mr. Paradee spoke, saying he wanted to note two points. The accident numbers used to re-prioritize the proposed Thompsonville project included accidents from other intersections. When comparing only the accidents at the Thompsonville and South Frederica locations, the numbers are about equal. He felt that comparing only the number of accidents at each location would have made the public safety factor points more even, and that the economic factor would have then tipped the scale in South Frederica's favor.

Mr. Paradee's second point was that the Greater Kent Committee was not asking the MPO to change anything; in fact, DelDOT was asking the MPO to change the priority project list that was already approved. He also said that he was not saying the change was unwarranted, just that it was the wrong way to go about it. The MPO already approved a project list, and he was only asking to maintain that position.

### 3. ACTION ITEM: Approval of Agenda (enclosure)

MOTION By Mayor Tinari to approve the agenda. Seconded by Mr. Sisson. Motion carried.

### 4. ACTION ITEM: Approval of Minutes of May 28, 2014 (enclosure)

Mr. Boyce noted that on page 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, he had a clarification; the \$23M mentioned for the South Frederica project is



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not all inclusive, it is only for construction.

MOTION By Mayor Tinari to approve the minutes with the above amendment. Seconded by Mr. Sisson. Motion carried.

## 5. DISCUSSION ITEM: FY2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program

Commissioner Eaby noted that the MPO was in receipt of a letter from Mr. Boyce on behalf of DeIDOT. He asked Mr. Boyce to review that correspondence.

Mr. Boyce said that DeIDOT began working on the analysis the MPO asked for after the May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting (reprioritizing the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) using the South Frederica grade-separated intersection as the number one priority). However, the emergency concerning the bridge on I-495 took all resources available. In addition there are only a few days left of the General Assembly session, creating uncertainty concerning revenue, and DeIDOT could not provide the MPO Council with the requested information.

He further said that it looked like there would be significant amendments to DeIDOT's STIP, going back to the proposed \$128M budget, which was reduced from the original \$228M proposal. Given that scenario, only general maintenance projects would be included in the STIP. He said that DeIDOT did not feel they could give the MPO good information with that uncertainty. He noted that, comparing projects of similar cost that could be moved around to accommodate changing the South Frederica project ranking, those projects were the West Dover Connector, Thompsonville grade-separated intersection, and the Little Heaven project. Those are the projects that could be substituted one for another.

Commissioner Eaby said he believed that South Frederica and the West Dover Connector projects were the two furthest along in the process; Mr. Boyce said yes, that advertising for construction for the West Dover Connector was scheduled for advertising August or September 2014. Thompsonville is about a month behind. He said that South Frederica could be ready for advertising in a couple of months.

Commissioner Eaby asked if Mr. Boyce had seen the DEFAC revenue projections; Mr. Boyce said that the General Fund revenue is predicted to be about \$2M more in 2015 than last year.

Commissioner Eaby asked where that leaves the MPO, if DeIDOT is not in a position to provide a draft FY2015-2020 Capital Transportation Program (CTP) due to a reduced budget. Mr. Boyce said that a proposed plan was presented to the Council on Transportation and was approved; that Capital Transportation Program (CTP) was presented to the Governor and legislators before March 15, 2014. Commissioner Eaby asked if that CTP was based on the \$228M budget; Mr. Boyce said yes, and depending on what happens in the legislative session, DeIDOT will have to go back to the drawing board, but they won't know what needs to be done until July 1. He added that that was not atypical, modifications always happen. Mr. Timpson noted that they will work through those changes in July and August.

Commissioner Eaby suggested that rather than make amendments to the TIP based on a CTP that *could* be passed, the MPO could wait for a revised CTP when the final budget numbers are known. Mr. Boyce agreed, saying that once the General Assembly passes a budget, DeIDOT makes changes to the CTP.

Ms. Townshend said that typically amendments made to the TIP after July 1 are based on funding, but this STIP requires significant changes to the TIP's priority list that were made without MPO participation. She said the MPO was backed into a corner, and that the CTP driving the TIP is not how the process is supposed to go. She stated that this was the issue that was Dover's concern, that DeIDOT changed the priorities in the STIP and told the MPO to change the TIP. The MPO has a different priority process, this was not just a difference in agency priorities.

Commissioner Eaby said that DecisionLens is a good step to try and direct funds in a more scientific manner, the problem is doing that retroactively. He said that it was wrong and flawed to apply the program to a project about to move forward and to affect decisions made by other agencies and government bodies using that information to plan for the future. He added that



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he was not convinced that DecisionLens provides a compelling reason to change decisions made by the County or the MPO TAC, PAC and Council. Commissioner Eaby said he believed the South Frederica Grade-separated Intersection began as a project without reference to the Regional Sports Complex, and it now has more significance. DecisionLens should not apply to ready-to-go projects. Changing priorities creates economic and long-range planning uncertainties; it is difficult for the public, businesses and other government bodies.

### **6. ACTION ITEM: FY2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program**

Commissioner Eaby suggested tabling the proposed FY2015-2018 TIP until the draft FY2015-2020 CTP comes back with numbers based on a reduced budget.

Mr. Boyce reiterated DelDOT's position on using DecisionLens, that the Secretary wanted a data-driven decision-making process. He noted that the Thompsonville project has been around since 2003, and was "back-burnered" to move South Frederica forward when that project became a new priority. In the future DelDOT wants to stay focused and be data-driven.

Ms. Townshend said she agreed, an objective approach is needed, but criteria is subjective, made up of measures and weights, and should be applied forward, not retroactively. The MPO and its member agencies should be involved in how those weights are set, or every year, we will be back here if we don't use the same data, and end up at "loggerheads" every year. She asked if there was a way to work together to make sure the criteria come through the PAC, TAC and Council, and noted that economic development has a very low rating, because transportation focuses on getting people through Kent County to the beach area, and that is not helping businesses here.

Mr. Boyce agreed that no one wanted to be in this position every year. He said that MPO staff reached out to DelDOT, and a meeting is set for next week to work with the MPO staff and TAC to work through the process to come closer together. The MPO will be getting a license to use DecisionLens.

Mr. Boyce also noted that, moving forward, Council's request to look at a scenario where the South Frederica Grade-separated Intersection is funded is not likely to happen with the reduced budget CTP.

Ms. Townshend asked if, in the absence of action by Council, would the FY2014-2017 TIP stay in place; the answer was "yes."

### **7. ADJOURN**

MOTION By Ms. Townshend to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Eaby. Motion carried.

**Next regularly scheduled bi-monthly meeting: July 9, 2014**