



# JOURNEYS

The Newsletter of the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization



**T**his month, the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization turned 25 years old. Since 1992, the transportation planning agency has proudly worked with federal, state, county and municipal agencies as well as the public to get people where they want to go.

Since its inception, the MPO has seen five federal transportation bills, seven long-range plans, nearly 20 Transportation Improvement Programs, has moved offices at least twice, and has had three executive directors. Its budget has grown from \$70,000 in 1992 to nearly \$850,000 this fiscal year.

Through its work, the MPO has made land use planning with a spe-

cific focus on transportation a more cohesive process in Kent County. The results have given the public familiar and well travelled roads and trails such as Scarborough Road and the Capital City Trail in Dover. The MPO has helped make bicycling and walking safer and easier for people. It was an advocate for Saturday DART bus service in Kent County. It has educated folks on the importance of clean air. Most of all, the MPO has been the agent that brings different voices to the table to discuss aspects of transportation in Kent County.

"As we contemplate the next 25 years, the Dover/Kent MPO will continue engaging decision makers and the public in a cooperative ef-

fort to help foster a practical and positive regional multi-modal transportation plan beneficial to residents, visitors, and businesses," MPO Executive Director Reed Macmillan said.

## **BEGINNINGS**

Kent County has steadily grown and changed over the years. It was growth that brought about the MPO's existence. In 1991, Dover and its surrounding areas reached a population threshold. With more than 50,000 residents, the urbanized area had enough people for the Federal Highway Administration to tell the Delaware Department of Transportation and the City of Dover they would need to form an MPO. Six months later, on Nov. 2, 1992, then Gov. Michael N. Castle formally designated

# Welcome, Reed

## Meet the MPO's new executive director

The Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization extends a warm welcome to its new executive director, Reed Macmillan. His first day with the MPO was Oct. 30.

Macmillan, of Middletown, is the agency's third executive director in 25 years. He comes to the MPO from New Castle County government where he had worked since 2002. Most recently, he worked in New Castle County's Department of Land Use as the assistant land use general manager. There, Macmillan oversaw the county's Planning, Engineering, Permits and Building Inspection divisions. Macmillan's new position with the MPO re-establishes former ties to the area. Macmillan worked for Kent County's Department of Planning Services before working in New Castle County. He also previously worked Aberdeen, Maryland for the Aberdeen Proving Ground in its Division of Environmental Conservation and Restoration. Macmillan further brings nearly 30 years of military experience to his job as a retired U.S. Army Reserve officer. During his service, he was twice deployed overseas to Kuwait and Iraq, respectively. He additionally served as an environmental specialist for the Maryland Military Department, Fifth Regiment Armory, located in Baltimore.

Macmillan said he's always been attracted to Kent County because of its lower population and residents' concern regarding development in locations where there is inadequate infrastructure. Macmillan continued to say that working with the MPO will allow him an op-

portunity to ensure that residents and local officials have input into the regional transportation planning process regarding transportation infrastructure.

Macmillan has been spending his first few weeks on the job learning more about the Dover/Kent County MPO, its work and its operations, to determine performance indicators as well as look for opportunities for improvement and efficiency. He is familiar with MPOs, having served as a council member for the Dover/Kent County MPO's sister agency, the Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) while working in New Castle County.

A metropolitan planning organization, Macmillan said, has a role as a conduit between county, municipal, state and federal agencies in terms of transportation infrastructure. As the MPO's executive director, Macmillan believes he can draw upon his planning background and military experience to leverage the necessary communication between agencies and the MPO's role as a facilitator.

"We want to be more strategic in our communication," Macmillan

said. "We need to engage the public a little more. We're already doing a good job of that. Maybe we can do a little more."

Macmillan also draws inspiration from the teachings of the ancient Chinese military strategist, Sun Tzu, in creating a plan for the MPO.



Macmillan

*"Once we understand ourselves, we can better understand other agencies."*  
—Reed Macmillan

"Once we understand ourselves, we can better understand other agencies," Macmillan said.

With help from the MPO, the county and its municipalities, Macmillan also said, the area still has room to be proactive instead of reactive to its changes. Kent County also is in a good position for economic possibilities. Transportation infrastructure — from highways to freight — can play a part in that.

"If our transportation infrastructure is solid, it's going to be attractive to future business," Macmillan said. "If we can manage all those together, it's ultimately going to raise our quality of life here in Kent County."

Macmillan has a bachelor's degree in Sociology and a master's degree in Environmental Planning, both from Towson University, and a master's degree in Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College.

## MPO, continued from Pg. 1

the MPO, according to an MPO document called the Dover/Kent Case Study that chronicles some of the agency's history.

Introducing an MPO to the area wasn't easy. There were naysayers.

"People thought it was just another layer of bureaucracy," said Ralph Reeb, a former DelDOT planning director who was involved with the MPO's creation. It took some time, he said, before other agencies started seeing the MPO's value.

Anthony J. DePrima, who was Dover's city planner in 1992, was also involved with the formation of the agency. As city planner, DePrima said he was asked to take the lead on developing the organization on behalf of the city. Dover was the central city within the urbanized area, and therefore had to be an integral part of the MPO, DePrima said.

For the first two years, DelDOT and the City of Dover assumed the administrative and financial management responsibilities of the new agency, according to the Dover/Kent Case Study. In those early days, the MPO consisted of a desk set up at the Blue Hen Mall while the DelDOT building was being renovated. Former Executive Director Juanita Wieczorek recalled in 2011 when discussing her career and retirement from the MPO. Despite its initial location for operations, the MPO always has been a standalone agency. Dover/Kent County MPO employees are not federal, state, county or municipal workers.

The MPO Council hired Wieczorek as its first executive director in 1994. Wieczorek served as ex-

ecutive director until her retirement. Rich Vetter then headed the agency from 2011 until June 30 of this year. Reed Macmillan became the MPO's third executive director in October.

In 1996, the MPO's jurisdiction expanded to include the parts of Smyrna and Milford that extend over the New Castle County and Sussex County lines to better ad-

"What the MPO has accomplished in the last 25 years [is to put] local governments' and the public's input into short-range and long-range transportation plans. These plans are a place to dream of what is possible in transportation planning, giving the local government and the public a stronger voice in transportation planning priorities."

### VOICES AT THE TABLE

Where the MPO really shines is in bringing people together. Federal, state, county, municipal and residential interests come to the table via plans, joint projects, and meetings among the MPO Council, Technical Advisory Committee and Public Advisory Committee.

"The best thing about the MPO is partnerships," Delaware Planning Director Connie Holland said. "Because it has been a wonderful planning tool. It has been a wonderful venue for the city and the county to plan for development. It has brought agencies together."

Before the MPO entered the picture, agencies didn't communicate much with each other regarding Kent County interests, Holland said.

"Years ago, we were kind of all in our silos," said Holland. "The MPO gave us a venue to get together to work out our differences."

Reeb concurred.

"It became a forum where people, if for no other reason, would sit next to one another," he said. "There was more communication between silos. How effective it was depended



Over the last 25 years, the Dover/Kent County MPO has watched central Delaware grow and change, while seeing a few changes of its own.

dress air quality conformity issues.

Within a few years of Wieczorek's hire, the MPO's budget grew and the staff gradually expanded to include an executive secretary, principal planner and public outreach manager. The office moved out of the Blue Hen Corporate Center in 2009 and into its current location on the third floor of Camden Town Hall.

The MPO's formation, DePrima said, transformed DelDOT transportation planning into intergovernmental planning with public input.

## MPO, continued from Pg. 3

on the communication between the individuals, but overall, there was more and better communication."

Of course, roads were still built and maintained before the MPO formed but DePrima noted that other considerations such as bicycling, sidewalks, transit and public input had less prominence.

"The MPO was a place where all of the voices could come and lay out what they wanted to do and [were] attempting to do," said Don Blakey, a former state legislator and longtime Kent County Levy Court commissioner. "One of the best services that the MPO does is provide a place where every voice can come and say this is what they want, or don't want."

### PROJECTS

Since its establishment, the MPO has been involved either directly or indirectly in numerous projects for central Delaware. A few of those projects include (some of these items have either been completed, or are in progress via municipalities or DeDOT):

- The POW-MIA Parkway (West Dover Connector)
- The Dover/Kent County MPO's Regional Bicycle Plan (which was updated this year).
- A truck route and a sidewalk study in Harrington
- Walkable community workshops
- A Suburban and Community Street Design Standards project.

"Over the last 25 years, the Dover/Kent County MPO has had a major impact on the surface transportation issues and needs of a growing Kent County," Dover Mayor and MPO Council Chairman Robin R. Christiansen said. "As those projects progressed, the MPO, along with its committees — the Technical Advisory Committee and the Public

Advisory Committee — have enabled the general public to participate in those major projects and their implementation."

For Wieczoreck, some of the MPO's standout projects include:

- A concept plan for U.S. 13 and 113. Project engineers and

study recommended improvements in Dover neighborhoods surrounding a transit hub near the downtown.

For Holland, one of the MPO's standout projects was a five-day workshop that focused on how to create a better southern entrance into Smyrna from U.S. 13. The project involved the MPO, the Town of Smyrna, DeDOT and the State Office of Planning Coordination.

"I think it's one of the most positive planning projects that we've had," Holland said. "It was just extremely positive. And it only would have happened because of the MPO, because it had the funding and it saw the need for it."

### THE FUTURE

The MPO continues to serve central Delaware, and plans to be around for years to come.

"I think it has morphed from being just an administrative neces-

sity to being a key component in the [thinking process]," Reeb said.

Blakey sees the MPO evolving and continuing its work.

"The MPO is the mixing pot for digesting, adjusting and advising movement around the ideas of its many partners regarding population movement," Blakey said. "As such, the MPO will continue to play an important role in Kent County. It may be modified as technology, research and application mature. With highly qualified and effective leadership, the MPO, as an apolitical body, has a major role to play in the maturity of Kent County."



From roads to bikes, the Dover/Kent County MPO has worked on numerous projects over the last 25 years.

planners from all over Dover spent a day coming up with a concept plan and hand drew plans for the city based on aerial photos.

- An extensive air quality outreach campaign, paid for through an EPA grant in the late 1990s. The grant paid for bike rodeos, outreach events, media spots, and a comic book that contained information on how to lower air pollution. The book featured a superhero named Captain Clean Air.
- A 2010/11 Dover Transit Center Neighborhood Plan. The

**Fun Fact:** At one time, the Dover/Kent County MPO was the only stand-alone, non-Transportation Management Area (TMA) metropolitan planning organization in the country.

# DART Collects food for Delaware families in need



DART this year collected 17.9 tons of food and goods for its annual Stuff the Bus food drive. This was DART's 20th year for Stuff the Bus. From Nov. 6-11, the agency stationed buses in Dover, Wilmington, Milford, Rehoboth Beach, Newark and Middletown. Part of the time, the Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles had additional participating donation sites. The Delaware DMV also participated by having mobile units stationed near the DART buses so that people could take care of driver's license and registration needs as well. The Voice Radio Network and the town of Middletown additionally served as drop-off sites.



TOP: DART employees Nicole Anupol, left, Sophia Isip, right, and event employee Sarah Rife, middle, organize canned goods in a box at the Acme grocery store in Dover.

BELOW: DART employees Kathy Wilson, left, Chip Roane, middle, and Peggy Raney stack boxes of donated goods to go into a DART bus stationed at the Dover Acme store.



# POW-MIA PARKWAY OPENS IN DOVER



*Veterans and officials unveil long-awaited road*



Federal, state and local officials, plus veterans and members of the public turned out on Sept. 15 for the official opening of the POW-MIA Parkway (formerly called the West Dover Connector). The long-awaited 3.2-mile road runs from North Street to U.S. 13 in Dover. The road had been on the Dover/Kent County MPO's Transportation Improvement Program for many years. Improvements were made at the U.S. 13 intersection with signal upgrades and additional turn lanes. There are auxiliary connections to New Burton Road and Wyoming Mill Road. The road also provides a direct connection to the Kent County Parks and Recreational Center and the Greater Dover Boys and Girls Club. Ret. Air Force Brig. Gen. Jon Reynolds spoke at the event, along with Gov. John Carney, Delaware Department of Transportation Sec. Jennifer Cohan and others. Veterans and members of the military not only attended the event, but helped to open and close the ribbon cutting ceremony.

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# A NEW WAY TO VISIT DELAWARE'S QUAIN T VILLAGES

**K**ent County Tourism literally has a new vehicle to promote sightseeing.

On Oct. 27, Kent County Tourism (doing business as Delaware's Quaint Villages) unveiled "The Villager" — a brand new mobile visitor center. This decked out van, purchased in partnership with Chesapeake Utilities, lets the agency demonstrate the benefits of tourism on the road. It features an outside screen to run videos of places to visit in Kent County, and a sliding window for staff to talk to and engage the public.

The goal of the mobile unit is to generate more economic impact by increasing the number of visitors to local attractions, restaurants and retail establishments in Kent County. The Villager's name is tied to the branding initiative, "Delaware's Quaint Villages," which Kent County Tourism debuted last year.

"The mobile visitor center can travel to the various cities and towns during peak times, which enables us to provide better service to the areas we promote and proactively engage with locals and visitors on what to do in Kent County," said Wendie Vestfall, president of Kent County Tourism. "It will allow us to assist with making tour arrangements, recommendations on attractions and dining and more for large groups that will be attending DE Turf

tournaments, Firefly, NASCAR races and various meetings at hotels and attractions. We are excited that Chesapeake Utilities shares our vision for growing tourism within Kent County. They are truly a great partner for the area when it comes to economic development and environmental awareness."

The Villager is a 250-Ford Transit that has been converted and equipped to run on Compressed Natural Gas, with gasoline backup fuel. The use of CNG minimizes the vehicle's output of gasoline emissions. Since the mobile visitor center is an environmentally-friendly vehicle, it goes hand-in-hand with environmental awareness and stewardship in Kent County. Natural Gas Vehicles help cut tail-pipe emissions, making the air cleaner for the people who live in and the tourists who visit the area.

"Chesapeake Utilities is proud to support responsible growth and imaginative promotion of tourism in our region", said Aleida Socarras, Vice President of Chesapeake Utilities. "The mobile visitor center does that by inviting people to all the wonderful quaint villages of Kent County, while being fueled by environmentally-friendly, domestic natural gas."

For more information about Delaware's Quaint Villages and the mobile visitor center, visit [www.VisitDelawareVillages.com](http://www.VisitDelawareVillages.com) or for more information about Chesapeake Utilities and CNG fuel, visit [www.chpkgas.com](http://www.chpkgas.com).



Photo and article courtesy of Kent County Tourism

## Council, TAC, PAC vote on leadership

**D**over Mayor Robin R. Christiansen will stay on as the chairman of the Dover/Kent County MPO Council for another year. On Nov. 1, MPO Council members held their annual officer elections for chairperson and vice chairperson. Christiansen had been the council's acting chairman since early this year, and the November vote officially extended his seat. Council members elected Kent County Administrator Michael J. Petit de Mange to serve as the council's vice chairman.

The MPO's Technical Advisory Committee and Public Advisory Committee held annual officer elections as well.

On Oct. 11, the TAC unanimously elected Assistant Kent County Planner Kris Connelly as its

new chairman. This is Connelly's first time as a TAC officer. David Edgell of the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination was elected to serve as vice chairman for another year.

PAC leadership will stay in place for another year following the committee's annual election on Aug. 22. PAC members re-elected Mike Gumrot as chairperson and Jayce Lesniewski as vice chairperson.

Council, TAC and PAC leadership positions stand for one year.

Four PAC members also have been re-appointed by their repre-

sending agencies. The Delaware Department of Transportation renewed Gumrot's appointment as its designee. Kent County Levy Court re-appointed Carolyn Cohee, Earle Dempsey and Jayce Lesniewski. All re-appointments took place in October.

The MPO TAC and PAC are set to hold a joint meeting at 5 p.m. on Dec. 13 in the King Meeting Room of Camden Town Hall.



Connelly



Christiansen



Gumrot

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#### The MPO Council:

Mayor Robin R. Christiansen — **Chairman**  
 City of Dover

Michael J. Petit de Mange — **Vice Chairman**  
 (for President Brooks Banta)  
 Kent County Levy Court

Mayor Justin King, Town of Camden  
 (for Kent County municipalities)

John Sisson  
 Delaware Transit Corporation

Drew Boyce (for Sec. Jennifer Cohan)  
 Delaware Department of Transportation

Terry Pepper (for Gov. John Carney)

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