

Journeys

The Newsletter of the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Senator Bikeway: Progress just a pedal away

Another school year has just started in Delaware. But by the time summer vacation rolls around, construction on the first phase of the Senator Bikeway could be underway.

Construction on Phase I of the Senator Bikeway is expected to start by June 30, 2017, the end of this fiscal year.

The Dover/Kent County MPO has been working with state and city officials on how to incorporate the Senator Bikeway into a thoroughfare for both motor vehicles and bicycles. Once finished, the Senator Bikeway would run along Route 8 from Dover's western city limits, through town and across U.S. 13 toward the eastern city limits. Along the way, the route would branch onto side roads and hook in with other bike trails, including the Capital City Trail.

The name of the project stems from the route's close proximity to four schools with-

in Dover's main district, whose mascot is The Senator.

Cost of Phase I is approximately \$720,000. Work in Phase I of the project calls for sidewalk replacement and widening on the north side of Route 8 at Saulsbury Road, near Booker T. Washington Elementary School, to West Street. Work additionally would involve:

- Replace and expand the sidewalk along the north side of Division Street from Weston Drive to Railroad Avenue, and install a two-way, on-street, Bikeway.
- Replace curbs and gutters where they are required.
- Upgrade curb ramps to ADA requirements.
- Replace landscaping where feasible and needed.

The Senator Bikeway is part of the City of Dover's Bicycle Plan, and is the City's top bicycling facility need, as Dover is without a designated east-west bike route. Dover's Bike Plan says the concept for the Bikeway arose from the need for a centrally-placed east-west bike route through Dover that is low-stress and safe for riders of all ages and abilities.

Members of Dover's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee and the public have viewed concept plans for the whole project, but only Phase I has designs and is set for construction this fiscal year. Remaining phases will come gradually in successive years.

MPO's Public Participation Plan seeks approval

A new version of the Dover/Kent County MPO's Public Participation Plan is in the approval process.

Every couple of years, the MPO reviews its Public Participation Plan to make sure its strategy for outreach is up to date and on track. This year, MPO staff reviewed this plan and made some updates.

Staff inserted up-to-date federal language and terminology, updated the MPO's public participation process for certain plans and programs, as well as updated the MPO's progress and strategies for public outreach.

All MPOs throughout the country are federally required to have a public participation plan. This MPO's plan has objectives to ensure the agency has a "proactive and meaningful public participation process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continued public involvement in developing regional transportation plans and programs."

These objectives are for:

- A thorough dissemination of information to educate the public and promote understanding of the region's needs

- Expansion of the Dover/Kent County MPO's constituency by increasing public and private sector and intergovernmental communications, and by reaching out to people who are traditionally underserved in the region

- Assurance of ample opportunity for participation in the decision making process for regional plans and programs.

The MPO Council, as well as the Public Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee, went through the Plan before staff released it for a 45-day public comment period in May and June. In August, the PAC gave its recommendation to Council to approve the document. The Plan will next go to the MPO's Technical Advisory Committee before it goes to the MPO Council for final approval.

MPO celebrates PAC at annual workshop



LEFT TO RIGHT: MPO Public Advisory Committee President Mike Gumrot, PAC member Karen McGloughlin and PAC member Jonathan Contant participate in discussion at the MPO's annual workshop in June at Dover Downs Hotel & Casino. The MPO holds an annual dinner meeting to thank the volunteer committee members for their work. The speaker at this year's meeting was Barry Benton, assistant director for bridges for the Delaware Department of Transportation.

MPO Regional Bike Plan gets an update

In 2011, the Dover/Kent County MPO released a regional bicycle plan. Now it's time for an update.

Over the summer, the MPO assembled a working group to update the plan, starting with reviewing the existing plan, and comparing it with changes that have taken place in the last few years and discover what gaps and needs still exist.

In September, the MPO held a public workshop to get some early input into the plan. Residents and professionals provided input from needs for bike parking outside of businesses, to desires for adding recreational trails and safer bike paths within the existing bike network.

Plan updates will continue through this year and next, with plan adoption anticipated in the summer of 2017.



Bicyclists and planners look at a map of central Kent County at the MPO's Bike Plan Workshop in September.

Plan 4 Health continues to work in Kent County



Planners and county residents look at charts showing options of healthy communities at a charrette for the Plan4Health committee.

Work on the Plan4Health grant continued this summer to find out what can be done to improve overall health in Kent County.

Leading partners on the grant held two charrettes, or multi-day workshops, in Kent County, one in Dover and one in Rising Sun, to net public input on what could get people outdoors and eating healthier.

David Edgell, of the Office of State Planning Coordination, who is a member of the grant leadership team, said the group will take research, consultant designs, and charrette results and determine which projects to focus on from September through December when the grant cycle ends.

The final presentation and other information from the two charrettes are on the Plan4Health's website at www.deplan4health.org.

SPOTLIGHT:

Sea Level Rise

PAC hears about an issue that can put roads and bridges under troubled water.

Barry Benton is a data guy. “For me, I’ve always been a skeptic on sea-level rise,” said Benton, the assistant director for bridges in the Transportation Solutions section of the Delaware Department of Transportation.

When he saw some presentations from Susan Love, who leads the Climate and Sustainability Section for DNREC’s Division of Energy & Climate, Benton thought more about this environmental topic. Love’s presentations include charts, dates, illustrations — and a good amount of data — about climate change, sea-level rise and annual average temperatures in the First State that go back as far as 1895. Between that year and 2005, rainfall increased .27 inches per decade, Benton said. State research data also shows temperatures rising .2 degrees per decade in Delaware.

“Not a big deal, but project that out over 100 years,” Benton said.

Benton spoke in June to the Dover/Kent County MPO’s Public Advisory Committee and presented information he’s learned about sea-level rise from Love and other sources. He incorporated this information with how environmental impacts relate to transportation issues, and what DelDOT does to arm

its roads and bridges against flooding.

Sea-level rise is a result of global climate change. In the case of Delaware and the mid-Atlantic, land is sinking while sea level is rising, Love explained in a later follow-up about this topic. Love said that the transportation sector is hugely important to combating climate change. More than 30 percent of Delaware’s greenhouse gas emissions are from transportation, Love said.

Engineers, Benton said, have three main solution choices in terms of roads and bridges and sea-level rise: harden (or make more resilient), elevate or abandon. None of these options come cheap or easy.

“We think we’re doing good until we start crunching numbers in terms of cost,” Benton said in his presentation.

To raise roads and bridges, he said, the cost between now and the year 2100 is \$1.5 billion to keep roads and bridges open. There are parts of Rt. 9 in New Castle County that might not be viable to keep open, and that’s a tough decision that his department might have to make later.

In his presentation to the PAC, Benton showed some photos DelDOT has of places throughout

the state that have experienced flooding. Some images were of a sand-coated Route 1 near Bethany Beach after Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012. Kent County, Benton said, seems to be the least affected county in Delaware, transportation-wise. However, small towns and coastal areas of central Delaware are, and will be, most affected, Benton said. Love later added that coastal towns like Kitts Hummock, Bowers Beach and Milford, as well as towns as far inland as Frederica, are at risk of flooding due to sea-level rise. But the reason Kent County’s roads seem to be the least affected statewide, is development patterns have largely kept roads from being built in at-risk areas.

When Benton designs bridges and roads for Delaware, his finished products have to stand up to sea-level rise and other environmental impacts. Delaware has regulations that require anticipation of sea-level rise in transportation projects, which is reflected in DelDOT’s bridge building manual.

“When I do bridges now, I’m designing for 75 to 100 years [of service life],” said Benton, who oversees more than 1,700 bridges in Delaware.

DelDOT uses GIS technology

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Sea-Level Rise, continued from Pg. 4



A school bus wades through a water-filled road.
Photo Courtesy of DNREC.



DelDOT engineer Barry Benton gives a presentation about sea-level rise to the MPO's Public Advisory Committee at its annual June workshop meeting.

and what is called a bathtub model to test sea-level rise in relation to bridge safety. If, for instance, sea level is projected to be five feet higher than it is today, the next step is to find out how many roads and bridges would be flooded.

Sussex County, particularly between Dewey Beach and Bethany Beach, is projected to need the most attention and money. Kent County roads are projected to need nearly 15 percent of state funds for hardening and/or elevating, due to sea level rise and storms. Bridges in Kent County will need less than one percent of repair costs.

Love, who has been working on climate change — which includes sea-level rise — since 2008 for the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, said Benton could be right about Kent County's roads being the least affected by sea-level rise. But the phenomena can put wetlands, natural areas and other things at risk, she said. According to Love's research and other state research, sea-level rise will cause economic, environmental and social justice issues in Delaware. Plus, she said, 36,000 acres of Kent County is state and federally protected land that is at risk of sea-level rise impacts. This amount represents the highest percentage loss statewide.

"We can adapt to climate change, which is what Barry was mostly talking about," Love said. "Build to be resilient to future conditions and we can mitigate or reduce or greenhouse gas emissions. For sea level rise, if we continue with business as usual,

we will likely have 4-5 feet of sea-level rise by the end of the century, which would submerge up to 11 percent of the state. But, globally, if we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, we can keep those impacts to a more reasonable level," Love said.

Love's office works extensively on initiatives to increase the deployment of clean fuels. Her office has incentives for using electric vehicles, and has rebate programs for clean fueled vehicles. To learn more, including what individuals can do to combat climate change, visit www.de.gov/cleantransportation.

DNREC also has maps that are available to view at www.de.gov/slrmap.

Total Cost Estimates to Raise All DelDOT-Owned Assets

COUNTY	Roads	Bridges	TOTAL
New Castle	\$293,142,890	\$51,670,169	\$344,813,059
Kent	\$207,867,192	\$11,583,599	\$219,450,792
Sussex	\$838,394,344	\$51,155,453	\$889,549,798
TOTAL	\$1,339,404,428	\$114,409,222	\$1,453,813,650

Graphic courtesy of DelDOT

DART on board with alternative fuel vehicles

DTC is working with electric and propane buses

Thanks to a \$2 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration, the Delaware Transit Corporation will soon purchase up to six zero-emission battery-electric buses.

The public got a chance to ride an electric-powered bus when manufacturer Proterra brought a vehicle to Dover on Aug. 11 and to Rehoboth Beach on Aug. 12, which is where DART said the buses will initially operate.

Electricity isn't the only alternative fuel that DART has branched into for its buses. DART, a subsidiary of DTC, has used propane autogas vehicles in its fleet for two years.

Earlier in August, DART and DelDOT held a ribbon cutting for a new propane autogas fueling station in New Castle. Delaware Department of Transportation Secretary Jennifer Cohan and DART CEO John Sisson joined ROUSH CleanTech, Sharp Energy and others to celebrate the public/private partnership between DTC and ROUSH to build propane fueling stations in Delaware, which will allow DTC to expand its fleet of propane autogas paratransit buses. Following a June 2014 executive order from Gov. Jack Markell, DTC successfully ran a two-year propane pilot program on five paratransit buses. In FY 2016, DART bought 50 more propane

buses, and plans to buy more this fiscal year and next, so nearly half the fleet —130 buses — will run on propane autogas.

DTC partnered with ROUSH, a propane fuel system technology company, to outfit a new fleet of propane paratransit buses and complete the needed infrastructure for two fueling stations at DTC facilities in Georgetown and New Castle. Each of the buses will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 91,000 pounds over each vehicle's lifespan. Sharp Energy will provide the fuel supply for the DART paratransit buses, along with technical and maintenance support for the vehicles and fueling stations.



An electric-powered bus parks at the Dover Transit Center at Queen and Water Streets. DART demonstrated the buses in August in Dover and Rehoboth Beach.

Photo courtesy of DART

Public input closes on draft Long-Range Plan

Survey nets more than 300 responses

Public input is now closed as the Dover/Kent County MPO puts the finishing touches on its draft Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Vision 2040.

The MPO started gathering public input in March through presentations at municipal meetings, public events, social media and a survey. All provided means for people to give their comments and feedback about transportation needs in central Delaware. The input period ended in mid-August.

The survey, which was available online or on

paper, netted more than 300 responses. It asked a variety of questions ranging from the length of work commutes to what people thought would be issues for central Delaware in the coming decades.

MPO staff should have the draft MTP ready for its committees and council to read this fall. There also will be a 30-day public comment period on the final draft before it goes to the MPO Council, as well as the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration for approval.

MPO Council OK's approves FY 2017-2020 TIP

At its September meeting, the Dover/Kent County MPO's Council approved the organization's Transportation Improvement Program for FY 2017-2020.

This proposed Transportation Improvement Program for FY 2017-2020 includes more than \$155 million over the next four years of road, bridge, and transit expansion projects in Kent County. Some highlights of this TIP include the completion of projects that have been in the planning and/or construction process for some time. Some highlights of the TIP include:

- Completion of grade separated intersections at Route 1/Thompsonville Road, Route 1/South Frederica, and Route 1/Little Heaven
- Completion of the West Dover Connector
- Completion of a roundabout at Route 10/Route 15
- Continued design of U.S. 13 widening from the Puncheon Run to Lochmeath Way
- Continued design of Crawford Carroll Road extension,

- Kenton Road improvements, and the Camden Bypass
- Twelve bridge rehabilitation projects
- Bike and pedestrian improvements (including the Senator Bikeway, West Street Trail, and Brecknock Park Trail connector)
- Purchase of additional transit vehicles related to the expansion of fixed route bus service in Kent County.

Although this is not the entire list of projects, the full list is available to view on the MPO's website, www.doverkentmpo.org.

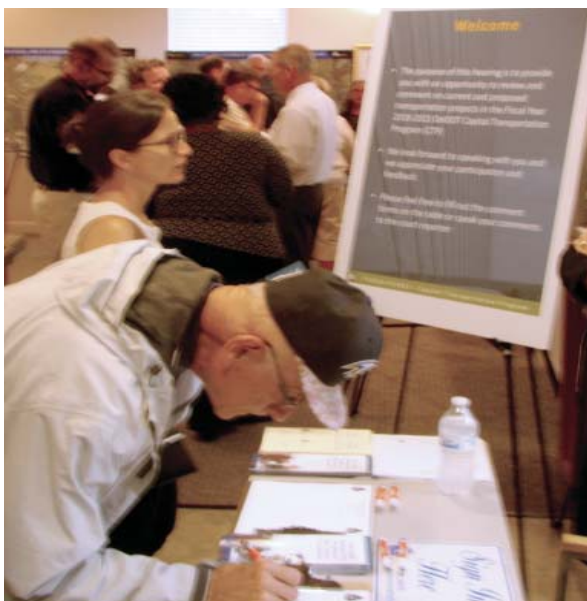
The TIP represents the first few years of the MPO's long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Projects in the TIP are ones for which the Delaware Department of Transportation wants to secure federal funding.

The TIP also serves as a budgetary guide for how much money will be spent on each project. A project's inclusion in the TIP does not guarantee construction will start within the TIP's time span, although designers and planners could be busy behind the scenes on a project.

MPO/DelDOT holds joint public hearing Sept. 19

The Dover/Kent County MPO and the Delaware Department of Transportation held its annual joint hearing for DelDOT's Capital Transportation Program. DelDOT had maps of upcoming projects, a list of ranked projects for the whole state, as well as illustrations of financial sources for projects, and how they're spent. In addition, DelDOT provided ways for

people to record their comments about projects. The MPO and DelDOT work in tandem on projects that take place in central Delaware. These projects are in the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program for fiscal years 2017 to 2020. The MPO Council approved the TIP on Sept. 7. In April, the MPO held a guided bus tour of transportation projects for Kent County.



LEFT: Area residents and planners from DelDOT, contracting agency Century Engineering and MPO staff gather in Camden Town Hall to discuss Kent County transportation projects.

ABOVE: DelDOT Director of Planning Drew Boyce, (left), Milford area resident Emmett Vennett (middle), and DelDOT Design Resource Engineer Jim Satterfield (right), talk about transportation issues in Kent County.

MPO spending plan OK for FY 2017

In May, the Dover/Kent County MPO's Council approved the organization's annual spending plan, known as the Unified Planning Work Program.

This spending plan, which became effective July 1, is approximately \$595,000. Part of the funds are marked for planning studies and programs that coordinate transportation and land use in central Delaware. Through the UPWP, the MPO will continue assisting municipalities with their comprehensive plan



development. In addition, the MPO will continue to assist the city of Dover's enhancement of its downtown development district by conducting transportation-related planning studies.

The Dover/Kent County MPO is federally required to have a written work program in accordance with the federal transportation bill, Fixing America's Surface Transportation, also called the FAST Act. FAST authorizes federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety and transit.

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