

Meeting Minutes

Salisbury/Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization (“S/WMPO”) Technical Advisory Committee (“TAC”)

February 6, 2024 @ 10:30 AM

Hybrid meeting GOB (Room 306) and Zoom

Attendees:

S/WMPO TAC members:

Tracey Taylor, Chair, Maryland Department of Planning (“MDP”)
Dorothy Morris, Vice-Chair, Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination
Eric Berkheimer, Salisbury University
Tremica Cherry-Wall, Delaware Transit Corporation (“DelDOT”)
Twain Evanson, Town of Delmar
Jeff Fleetwood, Town of Delmar
Austin Gray, Delaware Department of Transportation (“DelDOT”)
Keith Hall, Wicomico County Planning Department
Berley Mears, City of Seaford
Jim Thomas, Salisbury-Wicomico County Planning and Zoning Commission
Jon Wilson, City of Salisbury, Department of Infrastructure and Development
Andy Wile, Shore Transit

Others:

Betty Tustin, The Traffic Group
Heather Coons, Rossi Group

Staff:

Gary Pusey, S/WMPO Administrator

Introduction

Chairperson Taylor opened the meeting at approximately 10:30 A.M. and welcomed attendees. She noted since this is a Hybrid meeting with a Zoom component, attendance was taken via roll call. Mr. Hall confirmed a quorum has been achieved.

Minutes

The first item of business was approval of the minutes from the May 11, 2023, meeting. Mr. Thomas made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted; seconded by Ms. Morris. With all participating members voting in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

Brown Street Corridor Study Presentation

Ms. Betty Tustin (The Traffic Group)

Chairperson Taylor welcomed Betty Tustin with The Traffic Group, and noted that Ms. Tustin has announced her retirement and on behalf of everyone, Chairperson Taylor expressed her appreciation for the assistance Ms. Tustin has provided to the S/WMPO through the years.

Ms. Tustin began the presentation with an overview of the Study Area, and she noted that Brown Street is a narrow road with several large recreational facilities on both sides of the street. Speeding is an issue on Brown Street, along with a concern for children crossing the street as they leave the parking areas to reach the facilities on the opposite side.

She pointed out the major recreational facilities on Brown Street, including the Crown Sports Center, Falcons Youth Sports, Beach Bounders Gymnastics, and the Fruitland Recreational Facility including the little league fields. She also pointed out the location of residential areas, including Colonial Village Bailey's Crossing, and nonresidential uses such as the Fruitland Business Park and Fruitland City Hall.

She stated that in the Spring of 2023 traffic counts were taken, including turning movements and a speed study was also completed along Brown Street and Division Street. She summarized the data collected, noting that the peak traffic occurred between 5-6 p.m. on a Tuesday in mid-April. Levels of Service ("LOS") were calculated for the five (5) intersections in the Study Area and although each LOS was "acceptable" at "D" or above, the Brown Street/East Main Street intersection for the east bound left through right was the only intersection that graded "D", and it also had the longest delay for vehicles attempting to turn.

She noted that the data indicates there is a speeding problem on Brown Street. Although the speed limit is 25 mph on Brown Street, the majority of vehicles were traveling above 40 mph.

Ms. Tustin also explained data indicating where travelers to Brown Street originated from; the mode of travel, which was predominantly private auto; crash data in the Study Area; and survey from a data of users in the area indicating their purpose for traveling on Brown Street.

Ms. Tustin then summarized the recommendations contained in the Study. These include:

- A raised crosswalk be installed on Brown Street connecting the Fruitland Recreational Facilities located on both sides of Brown Street, with the crosswalk meeting certain dimensional requirements;
- Flashing signage be installed at this crosswalk with pushbutton operation;

- She also noted that technology exists that allows the flashing signage to operate by video/camera, or with LIDAR, without requiring manual operation;
- Lighting (streetlights) is also recommended at the crosswalk;
- Multi-use path be installed on the east side of Brown Street adjacent to the parking lots for pedestrians. This path would lengthen an existing path directly opposite Garrison Way;
- On South Division Street, a multi-use path or sidewalk is recommended to be installed from the existing parking lot to East Main Street;
- Two (2) radar signs are recommended on Brown Street near the Fruitland Recreation Facility; and
- Should funding become available, it is recommended that the existing grass parking lot opposite Garrison Way be converted to gravel to eliminate the haphazard parking that is now occurring.

She concluded by summarizing project costs for the proposed crosswalk, and depending on the features discussed, the cost would range from \$5K for a painted raised crosswalk to \$100K to include the various signage alternatives with the streetlights.

Chairperson Taylor asked if members had any questions.

In response to a question from Mr. Thomas, Mr. Hall stated that implementation funding would likely need to come from a variety of sources, both State and Federal, and S/WMPO Staff will assist the City with possible funding alternatives.

Chairperson Taylor thanked Ms. Tustin for the presentation, and noted that this Study is timely as she has previously experienced the traffic conditions in this area and believes the Study addresses serious safety concerns.

FY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program – Proposed Amendments

Gary Pusey (S/WMPO)

Chairperson Gordy asked Mr. Pusey to present the proposed amendments to the adopted FY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (“UPWP”). Mr. Pusey stated the purpose of this agenda item is allocate an additional \$43,063 in carryover funding received from MDOT to certain line items within the budget. The original UPWP was reviewed by the TAC on May 11, 2023, and was adopted by the Council on May 18, 2023.

Proposed amendments included:

- Long Range Transportation Plan: Increase by \$10,000.00;
- MPO Administration: Decrease by \$10,000.00;
- GIS Enhancements: Increase by \$5,000.00;
- Wor-Wic Community College U.S. 50 Egress Study: Increase by \$9,999.00; and
- Six Points Intersection Study: Increase by \$28,064.00

Mr. Pusey stated that Staff endorses forwarding a favorable review to the S/WMPO Council for its consideration at an upcoming meeting. Mr. Hall noted that these proposed amendments were available for public review for 15 days and no comments were received.

Chairperson Taylor inquired if there were any questions from the TAC members, and there were none.

A motion was made by Mr. Fleetwood to forward a favorable recommendation on the proposed amendments to the adopted FY 2024 UPWP for S/WMPO Council review and action; seconded by Mr. Thomas. With all participating members voting in favor and none opposed, the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Hall abstained from voting.

FY 2024 – FY 2027 Transportation Improvement Program – Draft

Gary Pusey (S/WMPO)

Chairperson Taylor asked Mr. Pusey to present the draft of the FY 2024 – FY 2027 Transportation Improvement Program (“TIP”).

Mr. Pusey stated the draft FY 2024 – FY 2027 TIP is a planning-level budget and is a companion document to the State’s TIPs and Capital Programs (6-year budgets), and the MPO’s Long-Range Transportation Plan. The TIP includes transportation projects within the Urban Area that will be funded using federal and/or state monies. As proposed, the Draft FY 2024 - FY 2027 TIP totals \$100.6 million for roadway, bridges, dams, bike and pedestrian, freight design, right-of-way acquisition and implementation projects and an additional \$36.2 million for transit. He noted that the overall anticipated spend over the (4) year planning period is \$136.8 million.

Mr. Pusey stated that Staff endorses forwarding a favorable review to the S/WMPO Council for its consideration at an upcoming meeting. Mr. Hall noted this draft was available for public review for 15 days and no comments were received.

Mr. Fleetwood asked about the public comment process, and historically how often does the public typically provide comments. Mr. Hall responded that in the approximate 20 year timeframe of the S/WMPO’s existence that public comments have been few and far between. He noted that in an effort to solicit public comment, S/WMPO Council meetings are advertised in the newspapers, and on the S/WMPO’s Website and the PAC-14 calendar. TAC meetings are also advertised on the Website and PAC-14’s calendar. He noted that typically with public meetings at the local government level, whether they be transportation-related or otherwise, his experience has been that people generally only attend or submit written comments if they are in opposition; if they are not opposed public participation is minimal. Mr. Fleetwood stated that he believes the projects being

proposed by the S/WMPO are extremely worthwhile and he was curious why there isn't more public support of these projects.

Chairperson Taylor inquired if there were any questions from the TAC members, and there were none.

A motion was made by Ms. Morris to forward a favorable recommendation on the draft FY 2024 – FY 2027 TIP to the S/WMPO Council for review and action; seconded by Mr. Thomas. With all participating members voting in favor and none opposed, the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Hall abstained from voting.

Long-Range Transportation Plan - Draft

Ms. Heather Coons (Rossi Group)

Chairperson Taylor welcomed Heather Coons with The Rossi Group.

Ms. Coons stated the Rossi Group has been assisting the MPO with the update of the LRTP, and she would like to provide an update of progress made with a goal of having the TAC forward a favorable recommendation to the Council for the Plan's adoption.

Ms. Coons provided information on the importance of transportation planning and gave an overview of the transportation planning process, beginning with a vision and goals and continuing through to project implementation. She noted that the LRTP for the S/WMPO, entitled "Connect 2050" is federally-required and is updated every four (4) years. The Plan's update began in March 2023 and contains a listing of prioritized transportation projects for the region over the next 25 years. Projects cover all modes of transportation, including auto, transit, freight, waterways, biking and walking. The LRTP was developed after obtaining input from interested stakeholders including transportation officials and the general public. A public informational meeting was held in May 2023, a public survey was available on the MPO Website and the MPO's Facebook page from April through August 2023, and interviews were conducted with stakeholders in the region in July 2023.

Mr. Hall stated that the LRTP is federally-required, and is fiscally-constrained, meaning that the projects contained in the Plan have an identified funding source. He stated there was an effort to obtain public input through advertising of public informational meetings and through social media, and he noted that this update was not a complete revamping of the Plan, but does meet all federal requirements for the Plan's update. He also pointed out that the Plan was advertised for 30 days and no public comments were received.

Ms. Taylor asked if any TAC members had questions. Hearing none, she asked for a motion to forward a favorable recommendation to the Council, and a motion was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Ms. Morris, and unanimously passed.

Member Updates

Chairperson Taylor asked if anyone had any member updates.

Ms. Morris stated that the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination's Annual Report is on their Website and contains interesting development trend data for Sussex County, especially in the County's eastern portion. She invited everyone to view the report on the Website, and at the request of Mr. Hall, stated she would provide the link to the report to the TAC members.

Mr. Gray noted that Jenn Cinelli-Miller has left DeIDOT and he is filling in for now, but he is not certain if he will be a permanent member of the TAC.

Mr. Berkheimer stated that this summer a massive renovation of Blackwell Hall will be occurring and one (1) of the major parking lots will be taken offline and visitors will be directed to other parking lots. The University is also preparing an RFP for a Facilities Master Plan and when that is available he will share with the TAC members. In response to a question from Ms. Taylor, he said Blackwell Hall will be a new student services building.

Mr. Wile stated Shore Transit anticipates restoring some of the recent service suspensions soon. They will also be developing an RFP for a Transit Redesign Study that will take approximately six to eight months and some of the TAC members may be asked to participate.

Ms. Cherry-Wall stated the DART Reimagined Study has been completed and will be shared on their Website any day now, and service to Delmar, Laurel and Seaford was highlighted in the Study. The Study shows some realignments will occur and they're looking to add more long haul service from Seaford to Dover.

Mr. Hall wanted to acknowledge that the City of Seaford applied for and was awarded funding from an SS4A Grant for a Local Action Plan, also known as a Vision Zero Plan, and the City of Salisbury was awarded \$12 million in SS4A funding for pedestrian and bike amenities.

Mr. Thomas noted that the Salisbury-Wicomico County Planning Commission has approved development plans for virtually all of the vacant land along Beaglin Park Drive in Salisbury, and although the development will occur in different stages, once built out there will be an increased amount of traffic along this corridor.

Chairperson Taylor provided an update about the WalkWicomico Committee, which receives funding from the S/WMPO to promote pedestrian movement. She noted that WalkWicomico partnered with Wor-Wic Community College and the Health Department and held its second annual "Shatter The Stigma" walk which was centered around

addiction education. She stated the walk was very successful and they had twice as many walkers attend this year, and she was appreciative that the S/WMPO provided funding assistance for this activity.

S/WMPO Updates

Mr. Pusey provided brief updates about the following projects:

1. Brown Street Corridor Study – Ms. Tustin presented to the TAC at today’s meeting and this will be forwarded to the Council at its next meeting;
2. LRTP – Ms. Coons presented to the TAC today and it will also be forwarded to the Council at its next meeting for adoption;
3. Southwest Sussex County Bike Network Master Plan – This is in the final stages of completion and will be presented to the TAC at its next meeting. The Plan covers the municipalities of Delmar, Laurel, Blades and Seaford;
4. Wor-Wic Community College Rte. 50 Egress Study – S/WMPO is entering a contract with a consultant to study a break in the access controls along U.S. Route 50 to allow Wor-Wic to have a second point of egress to Rte. 50 in addition to Walston Switch Road for safety reasons in the event of an emergency; and
5. U.S. Rte. 13 & MD 54 Pedestrian Improvements Study – S/WMPO is entering into a contract with a consultant to review this intersection in Delmar to identify pedestrian-related improvements designed to increase safety and connectivity in addition to meeting ADA requirements.

Mr. Hall gave attendees a brief description of funds that will be available within the S/WMPO’s Urban Area under a federal Carbon Reduction Program, and a presentation will be made by MDOT staff at the next TAC meeting to explain what projects will be eligible for funding.

Mr. Hall also reminded member jurisdictions that the S/WMPO’s drone is available upon request to assist with intersection and corridor studies or Planning Commission presentations.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Next Meeting Date/Adjourn

There being no other business before the TAC, upon a motion by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Fleetwood, with all participating TAC members voting in favor and none opposed, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:55 A.M.