

Meeting Minutes

Salisbury/Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization (“S/WMPO”)

Council meeting

December 5, 2022 @ 1:30 P.M.

Government Office Building

Council Chambers (Room 301)

Salisbury, Maryland 21801

&

Zoom Hybrid meeting

Attendees:

S/WMPO Council members:

Matt Creamer, Chairman, Wicomico County

Charles Anderson, Vice-Chairman, City of Seaford, DE.

Tyson Byrne, Maryland Department of Transportation (“MDOT”)

Pamela Steinebach, Delaware Department of Transportation (“DeIDOT”)

Jack Heath, City of Salisbury

Andy Kitzrow, City of Salisbury

Greg Padgham, Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore

Josh Hastings, Wicomico County Council

Staff:

Keith Hall, S/WMPO Executive Director

Ben Zito, S/WMPO Planner

Others:

Anson Gock, DeIDOT

Dan Dalton, KFH

Will Sutton, KFH

Savannah Edwards, Rossi Group

Marc Côté, Rossi Group

Rashad Pinckney, MDOT

Introduction

Chairman Creamer opened the meeting at approximately 1:30 P.M. and welcomed attendees. He noted that since this is a hybrid in person and zoom meeting, attendance will be confirmed by Mr. Hall as members arrive. Chairman Creamer asked Mr. Hall to confirm if a quorum had been achieved, and Mr. Hall confirmed that it had.

Minutes

The first item of business was approval of the minutes from the June 2, 2022 meeting. Mr. Byrne made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted; seconded by Mr. Heath. With all participating members voting in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

Capital Transportation Program (“CTP”) Project Prioritization Process Presentation

Anson Gock (DelDOT)

Chairman Creamer welcomed Mr. Anson Gock from DelDOT.

Mr. Gock provided an overview of the CTP Process and how projects go from the development stage to prioritization for inclusion in the CTP. He noted that projects are requested from MPOs, local jurisdictions and the general public in the Spring of each year, and that information is included in a Draft CTP that is completed by August. A Public Hearing is held in September, and comments from the Hearing are provided to the Council on Transportation (“COT”) in December for review and consideration, with a vote to be completed by February of the following year. The next step is a Bond Bill Approval that will provide funding for the proposed projects, to include design, right-of-way acquisition and construction.

Mr. Gock summarized the CTP Prioritization Criteria used to evaluate projects, and he noted that the criteria were revised and updated just prior to COVID and he highlighted a few of the changes that have been added, including that relating to Environmental Justice. He pointed out the Website address in case anyone wanted more detail on these criteria.

Following the presentation, Mr. Hall inquired about the process from priority letter and comprehensive plan to inclusion in the CTP. Mr. Gock clarified the process varies from how it is typically done given that the MPO only covers a portion of Sussex County.

Chairman Creamer asked if any members had any questions, and there being none, he thanked Mr. Gock for presenting.

Transit Development Plan (“TDP”) for Shore Transit Presentation

Dan Dalton & Will Sutton (KFH Group)

Chairman Creamer welcomed Dan Dalton and Will Sutton with KFH Group.

Mr. Dalton stated the development of this plan was a nine-month process that concluded in June. He noted that the TDP is required by the Maryland Transit Administration and is a 5-year plan that looks at existing transit services and potential improvements. Shore Transit uses it as a guide for future projects, and these projects need to be in the TDP when Shore Transit seeks funding for them. He stated the Shore Transit Advisory Board endorsed the plan in June.

Mr. Dalton summarized the needs assessment that helped formulate the plan, which included input from the Shore Transit Advisory Board and Staff, a Rider Survey, and a Community Survey of non-riders, in addition to stakeholder interviews and a review of recent plans and studies.

Mr. Sutton summarized the results from the Rider Survey, which included desired service improvements such as additional weekend service, more frequent service, earlier service in the morning and later service in the evening, and more direct services. He then summarized the results of the Community Survey that identified factors that would encourage public transit use, which included improved access to transit information, expanded evening and weekend service, earlier service in the mornings, and on-demand service using smartphone apps.

Mr. Sutton discussed Microtransit and explained this is an on-demand, real-time service that results in dynamic routing and scheduling, and requires less resources than what is used for a traditional bus line. Trips can be requested via a smartphone app, and can be more efficient since smaller vehicles are used with automated scheduling. An assessment was conducted to determine where this option may be most effective, and a pilot project in Salisbury, including the northern part of the City, is being recommended, and depending on the success of that project, additional routes could be added in other areas of Salisbury, or perhaps in Princess Anne and/or Snow Hill.

Mr. Dalton then discussed potential phasing of projects, with phases consisting of Short-term (1-2 years); Mid-term (3-4 years); and Long-term (Year 5 and beyond). Short-term projects included expanded weekend service and the Salisbury Microtransit Pilot Program; Mid-term projects included increased service frequency and expanded Microtransit services; and Long-term projects included additional Microtransit services and route structure reassessment, among others.

Andy Kitzrow inquired about Microtransit being similar to Shore Transit or being more of a private program similar to Uber and Lyft or private contractors using their own vehicles. Mr. Sutton responded that there are three basic operational styles available, with one option that piggybacks off of an existing service such as Lyft and Uber and utilizing their drivers and the existing network, and this is effective in more dense urban areas; for agencies that don't have vehicles or drivers available a second option is to contract with an existing service as a turn-key operation; and a third option for agencies that do have vehicles and drivers is to secure a contract with a provider to utilize their software.

There were no further questions, and Chairman Creamer thanked Mr. Dalton and Mr. Sutton for presenting.

Chairman Creamer called for a consensus vote for the plan as presented. Mr. Hastings made a motion, seconded by Mr. Anderson. With all participating members voting in favor, none opposed, the motion passed to endorse the TDP.

U.S. Route 13 Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety and Connectivity Study Presentation

Marc Coté & Savannah Edwards (The Rossi Group)

Chairman Creamer welcomed Marc Coté & Savannah Edwards from The Rossi Group. Mr. Coté started the presentation with an overview of the project. He pointed out the Study Area, which extended along U.S. Route 13 from College Avenue to Kay Avenue, and also included Wesley Drive extending from U.S. Route 13 via Dogwood Drive and Pine Bluff Road. He stated that the purpose of the Study was to analyze pedestrian and cyclist needs in this area and to identify improvements that would address safety concerns and opportunities to improve non-motorized connectivity.

Ms. Edwards then summarized the existing conditions analysis. She noted that they performed 12-hour traffic counts between 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. between April 28 – May 20, 2022, and they also conducted a count on Sept. 1, 2022. The counts generally indicated mid-day peaks with high volumes along U.S. Route 13, and high pedestrian activity at the Bateman Street Tunnel and at Dogwood Drive.

Ms. Edwards noted that they reviewed crash data, local land use plans, and conducted a student survey that generated good feedback that assisted with the development of their recommendations.

Mr. Coté then summarized the nine (9) concept plans they developed within the Study Area. A short-term and long-term option were developed for both Dogwood Drive and College Avenue at U.S. Route 13, with the short-term options having a much lower cost and consisting of pedestrian signals and crosswalk enhancements. The long-term option for Dogwood Drive included an underground tunnel under U.S. Route 13, and for College Avenue a pedestrian bridge was proposed. Mr. Coté summarized the concept plans for the other intersections with U.S. Route 13, including Bateman Street; Pine Bluff Road; and Kay Avenue; and he also summarized the plans for Wesley Drive bike and turn lane improvements along the length of U.S. Route 13 within the Study Area.

Ms. Edwards summarized the prioritization schedule and cost estimates for the concept plans. The prioritization schedule was broken down into short-term projects (0-3 years); mid-term projects (3-7 years); and long-term projects (7+ years).

Mr. Heath asked where the students went when they crossed Route 13 from Dogwood Drive. Mr. Hall responded that the students were going between the East and West campus, cutting between the Truist Bank and AutoZone Store.

Mr. Hall clarified that MDOT was consulted with this plan.

Mr. Kitzrow asked about the next steps. Mr. Hall stated that the completed studies will be used for informed data, which can be included in the priority letter and capital programming.

Chairman Creamer thanked Ms. Edwards and Mr. Coté for the presentation.

Proposed Amendments – 2019 Long Range Transportation Plan – Connect 2050,
Appendix F – Resolution 03-2022

Keith Hall (S/WMPO)

Chairman Creamer asked Mr. Hall to present the proposed amendments to the 2019 Long Range Transportation Plan (“LRTP”).

Mr. Hall stated annual amendments to the LRTP are necessary to ensure consistency between the Maryland and Delaware capital plans, the States’ Transportation Improvements Programs (“STIP”), and the MPO’s TIP. Projects included in the TIPs have to also be included in the LRTP in order to be funded.

Mr. Hall first summarized the Highway Needs Inventory (“HNI”) for Maryland, and he noted that these projects generally don’t change in the LRTP, but when the LRTP is revisited next year the TAC and Council will review these to see if they are still priority projects.

He then summarized the System Preservation projects related to roads, bridges, and bicycle/pedestrian facilities for both Maryland and Delaware, and he explained that proposed changes are indicated by “strike-thru” for projects that are completed and can be deleted from the LRTP, and new projects are indicated in red text. The total estimated cost of the System Preservation projects has increased from \$24.2 million to \$29.1 million with the addition of the new projects.

He also summarized the System Preservation projects related to transit for both States, and he highlighted the proposed changes. The total estimated cost for these projects decreased from \$55.3 million to \$44.7 million, but he noted that these figures fluctuate from year to year and should not be considered an indication of a trend, but instead should be considered as an evaluation of only this year.

Mr. Hall concluded by stating these proposed amendments were available for public review for 15 days and no comments were received. He stated that Staff recommends approval of Resolution 03-2022.

Chairperson Creamer asked if there were any questions, and seeing none, asked for a motion. Mr. Heath made a motion to approve Resolution 03-2022, Mr. Byrne seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Draft FY 2023 – FY 2026 Transportation Improvement Program – Resolution 04-2022

Keith Hall (S/WMPO)

Mr. Hall presented the draft of the FY 2023 – FY 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (“TIP”).

Mr. Hall stated the draft FY 2023 – FY 2026 TIP is a planning-level budget which 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 Urbanized Area that will be funded using federal and/or state monies. As proposed, the Draft FY 2023 - FY 2026 TIP totals \$101.4 million for roadway, bridges, dams, bike and pedestrian, freight design, right-of-way and implementation projects and an additional \$41.2 million for transit. He noted that the overall anticipated “spend” over the (4) year planning period is \$142.6 million.

Mr. Hall concluded by stating these proposed amendments were available for public review for 15 days and no comments were received. The TAC reviewed the FY 2023 - FY 2026 TIP and forwarded to the council with a favorable recommendation. He stated that Staff recommends approval of Resolution 04-2022.

Mr. Byrne clarified that the adoption date on the cover is listed as November, when it should be amended to reflect December for the meeting date.

Chairman Creamer inquired if there were no further questions from the TAC members, and there were none.

A motion was made by Mr. Byrne to approve Resolution 04-2022, the draft FY 2023 – FY 2026 TIP; seconded by Mr. Kitzrow. With all participating members voting in favor and none opposed, the motion passed unanimously.

Member Updates / Other Business

No Member updates were discussed.

S/WMPO Updates

Chairman Creamer asked if there were any MPO updates that Mr. Hall would like to share.

Mr. Hall stated that going into the 2023 calendar year, the goal is to return to quarterly council meetings as they were prior to COVID-19.

Mr. Hall also stated that the call for projects is open until the end of December. Furthermore, the 2020 Census boundaries data is anticipated to be released at the end of the week.

Mr. Hall introduced Mr. Ben Zito, a planner with the Wicomico County Dept. of Planning, Zoning and Community Development. Mr. Hall also noted that the MPO is available to provide technical assistance to member jurisdictions, and he pointed out that the MPO has recently purchased a drone, and Mr. Zito has become certified in drone operation. In addition, the MPO has purchased a Mio-Vision video collection unit that can be used for intersection studies or other traffic analyses that don't require a full traffic impact study. Mr. Hall encouraged the member jurisdictions to send him an email explaining any requests they may have and the MPO will assist if at all possible.

Mr. Hall also shared that Mr. Zito has been accepted to the National Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) National Technical Committee as an emerging professional.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Next Meeting Date/Adjourn

There being no other business before the Council, upon a motion by Mr. Heath, seconded by Mr. Padgham, with all participating Council members voting in favor and none opposed, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:30 P.M.