

I-95 Wilmington Corridor Improvements Advisory Group

MEETING #1 SUMMARY

Wednesday, July 24, 2018, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Chase Center on the Riverfront

Wilmington, DE

MEMBERS ATTENDING

NAME	ORGANIZATION	NAME	ORGANIZATION
Mike Baiocco	The Kercher Group	Joe Leonetti	St. Francis Hospital
Marchelle Basnight	Wilmington City Council	Mark Lorenz	Nemours/A I DuPont Hospital
Dave Burke	Happy Valley	Dep. Chief Jerry McCaffery	Wilmington Fire Dept.
Fr. Rodolfo Ramòn Cabrera	St. Paul's Catholic Church	Megan McClinchey	Riverfront Development Corp
Capt. Trish Davies	New Castle County Police Dept.	Jason Miller	NCC Executive's Office
Jeff Donovan	Christiana Care Health System	Brian Mitchell	City of Wilmington
Insp. Charles Emory	Wilmington Police Dept.	Paul Morrill	Committee of 100
Dave Gula	WILMAPCO	Jessica Mullaney	Trinity Vicinity Neighborhood Assn
Capt. Dawn Gulezian	New Castle County EMS	John Rago	City of Wilmington Mayor's Office
Asst. Chief Don Holden	New Castle County 911	Rob Snowberger	The Buccini/Pollin Group
Robert Keesler	Delaware Ave. Community Assn	Kelly Williams	City of Wilmington
Jennifer Kmiec	Committee of 100	Michelle Williams	Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Ctr
Paul Kulesza	DART	Karen Worthington	Bank of America
Sarah Lester	Cornerstone West CDC	Clara Zahradnik	Cool Spring/Tilton Neigh. Assn

PROJECT TEAM ATTENDING

Bud Freely, DelDOT
Percival McNeil, DelDOT
Craig Stevens, DelDOT
Bill Geschrei, Whitman, Requardt and Associates, LLP
Neil Leary, Whitman, Requardt and Associates, LLP
Linda Moreland, Remline Corp

HANDOUTS

- Meeting Agenda
- Project Brochure

INTRODUCTIONS

Craig Stevens from the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the first Advisory Group meeting for the I-95 Wilmington Corridor Improvements project. Following Craig's introduction, each Advisory Group member briefly introduced themselves, their organization and why they were interested in the project. The staff members introduced themselves and explained their roles on the project. Craig then turned the meeting over to Bill Geschrei from Whitman, Requardt and Associates, LLP (WRA).

ROLE OF THE ADVISORY GROUP

Bill briefly explain that the role of the Advisory Group is to review and understand the project components, goals and impacts; then use that information to educate and inform their constituents (community, co-workers, employees, etc.). The Advisory Group will also provide DeIDOT with feedback and insight to help improve the project, attain the project goals, lessen impacts wherever and whenever possible, increase public awareness, and promote a safer work zone during construction.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

A PowerPoint presentation was provided by Bill Geschrei and Neil Leary from WRA. Key highlights included:

- Project Limits – The I-95 Wilmington Corridor Improvements Project will rehabilitate I-95 from I-495 to north of the Brandywine River Bridge. When completed, the improvements to this six-mile stretch will extend the service life of 19 bridges for a minimum of 30 years.
- I-95 Corridor History – This portion of I-95 was originally built in 1964. Portions of the road and bridge were widened in 1978. Repairs were completed to the Wilmington Viaduct and adjacent bridges in 2000-2001.
- Purpose and Need – This project is being done to maintain and preserve the corridor in a state of good repair and to extend the life of the 19 bridges for a minimum of 30 years. In addition, the project will enhance safety along the corridor and improve the roadway efficiency in order to lessen traffic congestion.
- Project Timeline – The project is currently in the final design phase. Advertisement of the project and selection of a contractor will happen in 2019. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2020 (*tentative*).
- Proposed Repairs – Proposed repairs include a new protective roadway riding surface, replacement of exterior roadway barriers, replacement or elimination of roadway joints, replacement and repaving of the road pavement, miscellaneous structural repairs and safety improvements.
- Safety Improvements – Several safety improvements were discussed including relocating the current merge from the South Jackson Street on-ramp to I-95 southbound. DeIDOT has record of 86 accidents in the last 5 years. The relocated on-ramp would originate on 2nd Street which will allow for an extended merge lane onto I-95 southbound, thus significantly reducing the frequency of accidents.

Improvements are also being made to the City streets and include:

- Adding a dedicated left turn lane at Lancaster Avenue
- Modifying lane configuration at N. Adams Street to provide a dedicated left turn lane
- Converting the current left lane at 2nd Street into a left turn/through lane and adding a dedicated left turn lane
- Modifying signal timings in the AM and PM peak to shorten intersection delay times

- Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) – In an effort to manage traffic during construction, there are several “must haves”. At least one lane in each direction on I-95 must be open at all times. Lane closures on I-95 must be limited to two years and ingress and egress into the City must be maintained at all times.

There are several caveats to the MOT requirements. The project will require staged construction and the use of contraflow on I-95. Contraflow means both directions of traffic on I-95 (southbound and northbound) will share the roadway (but separated by a traffic safety barrier). It will also require the staggered closure of the I-95 on-ramps and exit ramps. There is the potential for a weekend or nighttime full closure of I-95 northbound or southbound to switch between major MOT stages.

More information on the stages can be found in the PowerPoint that was presented at the meeting. This information will be posted on the project website at https://www.deldot.gov/information/projects/bridges/I-95_CorridorImprovements/I-495_North_of_BrandywineRvr/

The City network will also be impacted by the MOT. MLK Boulevard will operate in contraflow during stages 2A and 2B and the S. Jackson Street ramp will be closed during the construction of the new on-ramp onto I-95 southbound.

There will be increased traffic on primary diversion routes in the City due to I-95 lane and ramp closures throughout the project.

- Mitigation Plan – The project team is developing a plan to help mitigate traffic impacts to the extent possible. The plan will include an incident management plan, active traffic management system (variable message signs, DelDOT traffic app and public outreach), revised signal timings in the City and local street improvements.

OPEN DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

There were several questions/comments brought up during the open discussion section of the meeting:

Are there any plans for future widening of the interstate system to address the need for additional traffic capacity?

When the decision was made to rehabilitate this portion of I-95, DelDOT took into consideration the current capacity of the system and came to the conclusion that the capacity is currently functioning well and should continue to function well for the duration of the expected life of the repair work.

Can the group have access to the MOT plans to view the various stages and better understand the construction sequence?

Yes, these will be posted for the group once they are finalized.

The local overpass bridges are in very poor condition; will DelDOT include the repair of the sidewalks and curbs as part of the I-95 Corridor project?

DelDOT will assess each of the overpass bridges within the limits of this project and will make any repairs needed to the sidewalks.

Given the proposed 2 left turn lanes onto I-95 SB from 2nd Street, what plans are in place, if any, to protect pedestrians and cyclists in this City block?

The existing pedestrian accommodations along the north side of 2nd Street between N. Adams Street and N. Jackson Street will remain. There is no sidewalk on the south side of 2nd Street in this block. There is a sidewalk along the north side of 2nd Street and that will remain. Due to the traffic signal phasing at the N. Adams Street and N. Jackson Street intersections with 2nd Street, pedestrians and cyclists should be on the north side of 2nd Street to avoid being in conflict with left-turning motorists.

Why are we proposing 2 left turn lanes from 2nd Street to access I-95? Do these 2 lanes merge into one further on the ramp? The projected left turn movement with the new ramp configuration is approximately 600 vehicles during both the morning and evening peak hours. To accommodate the projected traffic volumes and minimize delays while reducing the vehicle queues, 2 left turn lanes were provided. The 2 left turn lanes will merge into 1 lane with signing and pavement markings prior to merging onto I-95 southbound.

Can the Advisory Group view the CPM Schedule? More specifically, are there specific dates associated with the start and end of each stage of construction?

There will be specific dates that we will be available as we get closer to the construction phase of this project. However, we can provide the group with anticipated durations for each stage.

Will the contract be prescriptive with respect to the various stages of construction? I.e., will the contractor be allowed to value engineer (VE) the sequence of work?

The contractor is always allowed to propose VE. DelDOT must approve these VE options before they can be implemented. However, DelDOT will not allow the contractor to implement any VE options that will adversely affect the timing or completion of this contract.

Can the Department consider flipping the signage along I-95 and I-495 (presumably to flip I-95 traffic to I-495 and vice versa)? Flipping the I-95 and I-495 signed designations will not alleviate the congestion during construction. Motorists are using existing I-95 because it provides a more direct connection from their origin or to their destination. Changing the sign designations is not going to change the origin and destination of motorists.

What plans are in place to address the condition of the City streets affected by this project?

DelDOT has committed to patching and repaving the roadways that will be most affected by this construction. This will be done prior to construction. If any repairs are needed after construction, DelDOT is committed to make those repairs as well.

Will City employers be asked to target certain reductions in employee travel times/trips to minimize congestion on I-95 during the project?

This will be up to the City of Wilmington and the discretion of each business owner. This could help reduce congestion and is an idea that can be discussed in future meetings.

Will the Department consider meeting with individual businesses to discuss the project and its impacts?

Yes, the design team would be available to meet with business owners or communities as needed.

Is the Department coordinating with other active projects (and future projects) to avoid conflicts?

Absolutely. This is one of the hardest things to predict as construction can be delayed by many unforeseen circumstances. DeIDOT is committed to complete the precursory contracts that are listed in the meeting handout prior to constructing these repairs. As construction approaches, we will continue to keep the group abreast of the progress on the precursory contracts.

WILMAPCO has a list of local street projects that could impact this corridor project. Is DeIDOT aware of these and have they considered the impacts on each?

DeIDOT works closely with WILMAPCO and will consider these projects so we can schedule accordingly.

Can DeIDOT look into communicating to neighborhoods through the Nextdoor social network?

Yes, we will look into using Nextdoor, Facebook, Twitter and other social media networks to communicate with the public.

Can DeIDOT have a separate Facebook page for this project?

We will look into the possibility of doing this. It is a good idea.

PATH FORWARD

Bill touched on several things that will be happening moving forward. The project team has a coordination meeting with the City of Wilmington on July 30th. The team is in the process of creating a public outreach video on the project that will be used to help stakeholders and the public better understand the project.

Work is underway to confirm the condition of the structures to ensure the repair plan is still relevant and appropriate when construction starts in two years.

FUTURE MEETINGS

It is anticipated that there will be an Advisory Group meeting approximately every three months until construction starts. After that meetings may occur on a monthly basis, or as needed.