

Open Work Session

September 4, 2018

Draft Wicomico County Priority Letter - Consolidated Transportation Program

Mr. Dallas Baker, Director of Public Works, came before Council. He said Council has seen most of these projects before, but he does have a presentation if Council wants him to go over that, or he can just go over the letter and highlight changes from last year, to which Mr. Cannon responded, he can just review the items in the letter Council has in front of them. Mr. Kilmer asked Mr. Baker to explain to the public what this letter is. Mr. Baker explained, the Consolidated Transportation Plan letter is what he likes to call the Maryland Department of Transportation's equivalent of the County's Capital Improvement Plan. He said this letter highlights the items that the County is asking the State to pursue that are typically in the capital project type range for improvements or studies they want the Department of Transportation to undertake, and the majority of these projects are directed to the State Highway Administration. He said the first section of the letter is to the Maryland Aviation Administration. He explained, there are seven divisions within the Department of Transportation to include Port Authority, Mass Transit, the Toll Authority, State Highway, and the Maryland Aviation Administration. He said this letter is highlighting to the State the items that the County is asking them to investigate and improve here in the County.

Mr. Baker said he will start with item number one, improvements for the Airport, which includes runway extensions, drone facilities, improvements to taxiways, and improvements to some of the buildings and distribution centers. He said all of these were submitted by Mrs. Veatch, and some items have been updated since last year.

He said the second item is Roadway Facility Improvements, and the first ask is for the relocation of the truck weigh station on Route 13 just north of Salisbury and south of Delmar. He said the County is asking the State to relocate that to a different location, and he believes that project is in the works with State Highway investigating alternate locations. Mr. Davis asked if some improvements have been done to the scale house, to which Mr. Baker responded, he does not believe so. He said, when he was with the State Highway, some of the buildings there were a little dilapidated, so he is sure they probably had to make some improvements to keep things running as they are scouting out different locations.

Mr. Baker said the second item is new and replaces the old item under Roadway Improvements, which was adding a signal to the intersection of Sixty-Foot Road. He explained, that project is currently under construction, so they removed it from the list and replaced it with a request for a speed reduction on Mt. Hermon Road/Maryland 350 near the intersection of Walston Switch Road. He said Councilman Joe Holloway presented a petition from 109 residents in the area to State Highway, which he will include with this letter, and also present to the Department of Transportation at their Tour Dinner at the end of September. Mr. Cannon said this states that Wicomico County is requesting the speed limit be lowered to 40 miles per hour through this corridor, but that decision has not been made yet by this Council, to which Mr. Baker responded, this process is just presenting the draft example of the letter to Council. He clarified, if Council all agrees with it, they will move forward, but if there are items Council would like to see revised, they can let him know, and they can certainly come to a consensus on which items need to be in the letter and presented to the Department of Transportation. Mr. Cannon said today is a Work Session, but this letter is dated August 27. He then asked if this letter has already gone out, to which Mr. Baker responded, no. He clarified, August 27 is the day he drafted the letter, and today is just a Work Session. He said this will be on the Council Agenda for formal approval at the next Legislative Session on September 18, so there is opportunity between now and then for comments, suggestions, and revisions.

Mr. Baker said the next heading is for Planning Initiatives, and there are several for the Salisbury Bypass making improvements to the ramps around U.S. 50 eastbound and westbound by the Salisbury Mall, as well as the other section of the Bypass by Shorebirds Stadium where folks have to crossover into traffic to get onto the Bypass headed north. Mr. Dodd said Cloverleaf by the Shorebirds Stadium looked like a good option at the time. He then asked Mr. Baker if he knows why they changed that, to which Mr. Baker responded, it is his understanding it had something to do with the turning radius for trucks. He said he was not involved with the County or State at that time, but he believes it was okay for cars, but there was an issue with trucks turning there, although he cannot swear to that. Mr. Dodd said the intersections just past Kmart going southbound and northbound have had a lot of fatalities, to which Mr. Baker responded, they made some improvements by Forest Grove changing from a yield condition to a stop condition with additional signs and pavement markings, but Mr. Dodd is correct in that there have been fatalities there even with those. Mr. Cannon said he is glad Mr. Baker is keeping this as a priority because they talked about it with Mr. Weston Young a couple years ago. He said, when the Bypass was put up, the interchanges seemed to be done as an afterthought, but now they really have to think about how difficult it is to get on and off where cars have to cross through traffic to access it, so he is glad to see Mr. Baker has kept this as a high priority. He said it will be good to see what the solution is, which he does not know, to which Mr. Baker responded, perhaps they can revise it using Cloverleaf.

Mr. Baker said the next priority is a safety study for the intersection of Maryland 12 and Nutters Cross Road. He said the State put up Look Again signs at Nutters Cross Road and Maryland 12, but that is another intersection with frequent crashes. Mr. Dodd said the speed limit may be a factor, to which Mr. Baker responded, the geometry of that intersection is less than ideal. He said, when approaching it, it is a skewed angle, so one has to look over their shoulder, so there may be some ways to improve that.

Mr. Baker said the next request is for an access management study so Wor-Wic can have direct access off and onto Route 50 instead of having to travel through the traffic circle and the Royal Farms traffic. Mr. Cannon asked if he can add something to the effect of getting rid of the traffic circle there. He said he does not mind traffic circles, but that is a convoluted mess. Mr. Joe Holloway said this item for Wor-Wic has been on the list for years, but the State has never considered it, to which Mr. Baker responded, the challenge with this one is they would have to break access control, which involves going to the Federal level, and the State funds a lot of these improvements with certain plots of money they get. He said, for example, if they are going to build a road and it is going to be access controlled, and then they go back and break those access controls, there is a lot of legal paperwork and costs involved with it, and it is not an easy task. He said he can tell Council from his experience with State Highway that there are things that Counties frequently ask for year after year. He said, to give Council an example, Ocean City wants a new Route 50 drawbridge, and they want two more lanes added to Maryland 90, and those are long-term asks that they just keep asking for and asking for until something moves up. He said, if there is something Council wants off the list, that is certainly easy enough to do if that is something Council still wants to pursue. He clarified, they just keep asking until it gets addressed.

Mr. Baker said the fourth item is a new item which is a request related to the drainage improvements along Nanticoke Road, and, actually, he means the entire corridor, where they are asking for a drainage study. He said one of the items that came about from the recent drainage outreach meetings they held was how many hotspot locations they have along that corridor where folks are experiencing problems with flooding. He said there are some on the northern end, and some on the southern end, but they are looking for help from State Highway to pinpoint how best to get the water off Nanticoke Road and into an acceptable accepting body of water. He said he understands they will have to partner with the State

to help provide access. He clarified, if the State is draining into the County's ditch, the County has to clean theirs. He explained, over the years, ditches have sedimented in, and the question is how Nanticoke was originally supposed to drain, and how the water was supposed to get off, and whether that way still make sense, or is there now a better way to approach it. He clarified, that is the ask. Mr. Cannon said that would be good because, during the last storm the County had, he ran into a gentleman who was about a quarter mile from his house with a pitchfork and shovel clearing out some of the ditches because he recognized the fact that it was flooding his front yard, and he just knew that nobody was doing anything about it, so he was trying to do what he could. Mr. Cannon then asked, with the drainage improvement study, was someone possibly looking at that area in the past couple of weeks because there was a vehicle there with yellow lights on the top, and they had a gentleman out on the street with some type of survey equipment. Mr. Baker then asked if that was around Willow Creek, to which Mr. Cannon responded, yes. Mr. Baker said that is one of the identified hotspots. He explained, Willow Creek floods frequently, and that field just sheets right into the community. He said they actually had water damage on his road, which is Willow Creek. He said, with that being a hotspot, it is getting addressed separately from this drainage study. He said it is kind of a low hanging fruit where the County knows what they need, which, basically, is a swale running along Nanticoke Road on the farm field side to pick that water up, get it into a pipe, get it under Nanticoke Road, and then into the existing drainage system. He said the State is a slow-moving entity, and they have a lot of environmental regulations they have to checkoff, so it is probably going to be about a year and a half process before they see something out there. Mr. Cannon clarified, those were State employees, to which Mr. Baker responded, yes. He said he met them out there a couple of times, and they are doing their surveying and figuring out what permits they need. Mr. Cannon asked if there was anything from the study the County did that was beneficial to help them with any of that, to which Mr. Baker responded, there were some identified crossing points along 349 that could be used to do some improvements along there, and some were related to Barrington Ridge, and some were related to Pratt Road and such. Mr. Kilmer added, this is a good priority.

Mr. Baker said the next item is also related to drainage along the U.S. 13 Bypass by Peggy Neck Branch, which, essentially, is right next to the railroad that runs parallel to Old Ocean City Road. He said that branch has sedimented in over the years. He said he went out there to take a look, and there are significant ruts developed along the Bypass where the water has sheeted off and carried sediment into the branch. He said they have been working with State Highway locally to get those areas cleared out, and they have done that. He reported, they have opened up channels through there, but there is still a significant amount of sediment coming off, and, basically, it is going to keep building up, and another good storm will wash that sediment right back into the branch. He said he has spoken to some State Highway employees, and the County has been told there is no short-term fix, but the State is working on a long-term fix to stabilize the embankments of the Bypass. He said, that is, potentially, a two-year process, so that is why his suggestion is to include this item in the letter so the State recognizes that the County recognizes this is a problem area that needs to be addressed to keep that branch open. He added, keeping Peggy Neck open, clear, and free-flowing is what helps the folks living along Old Ocean City Road keep their houses from flooding.

Mr. Baker said the next item is under Pedestrian Improvements, and these are for sidewalks and crossings along the Route 13 business corridor mostly concentrated on the north end between Zion Road on the south. He explained, the next closest crossing for pedestrians is Connelly Mill, so in front of the Salisbury Mall, and in front of Walmart and Chile's, there is no way for folks to get from one side to the other. He said, typically, that area is not that bad with pedestrians, but there is also the theory of if you build it they will come. He said, when they have events such as the USSSA Softball Tournament, they

frequently see folks staying on the Hampton Inn side trying to get over to Panera, or vice versa. He said they are bouncing back and forth, and there are just no pedestrian amenities through one of the most heavily traveled areas in the County. He concluded, again, they feel like this is an area that needs some pedestrian improvements to avoid fatalities and pedestrian crashes.

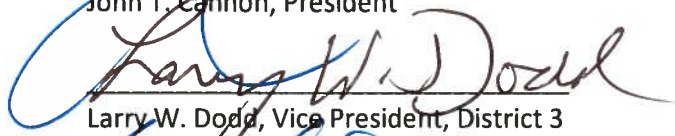
Mr. Baker said the next section is Municipal Requests, which were forwarded to the County by the City of Salisbury, the Towns of Delmar, Hebron, and Pittsville. Mr. Joe Holloway asked if the folks from these towns will be at the meeting to make their case, to which Mr. Baker responded, he believes they receive an invitation to it. He said, typically, the County has included their bullet points in their presentation, and go over them with State Highway and the folks in the Department of Transportation. He said they are, of course, welcome to develop their own presentation if they like. He said they tend to rely on the County to do that, and they have not heard any complaints so far.

Mr. Baker concluded, those are the changes. He said, again, the reduction from the previous year's letter is taking out Sixty-Foot Road, and the new additions are the Mt. Hermon Road speed study, two drainage improvement items, and also the Town of Pittsville's requests are new to this year's letter.


Mr. Joe Holloway said he would like to make an additional request to this to include a letter thanking the State Highway Administration for the work on the Sixty-Foot Road intersection if Council agrees. He said it has been a long time coming, to which Mr. Cannon responded, he does not think there is anybody objecting to that. Mr. Baker said he will add that. There was no further discussion.



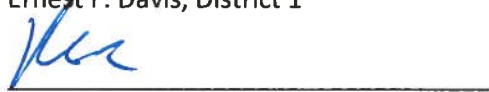
John T. Cannon, President



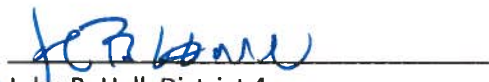
Larry W. Dodd, Vice President, District 3



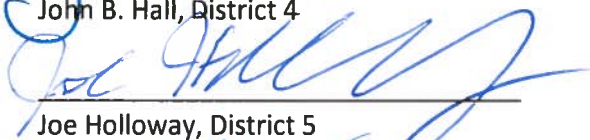
Ernest F. Davis, District 1




Marc Kilmer, District 2



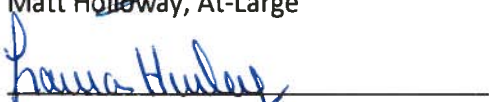
John B. Hall, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



Matt Holloway, At-Large



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator