

Speaking Points for Dave Gula, Principal Planner, WILMAPCO:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

"MAP-21 REAUTHORIZATION: STATE AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES  
AND FUNDING"

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2014, 9:45 AM Dirksen 406

Good morning, Chairperson Boxer, Ranking Member Vitter, and members of the Committee. I am very happy to be here today to speak about the MAP-21 Re-authorization and represent the WILMAPCO region, which consists of New Castle County, DE and Cecil County MD.

WILMAPCO has been active in planning at the community level, and we were very happy to see both the TE and Safe Routes programs carried forward into the TAP with MAP-21. Staff have utilized these funds to move large projects forward in segments during recent years when capital funds were scarce or focused on larger projects. WILMAPCO has also used TAP and funds from the Safe Routes to School sub-program to implement projects that have been recommended by community planning studies, as was done when we completed the Southbridge Circulation Study. Southbridge is a low income, minority neighborhood in South Wilmington that has been a focus of our Environmental Justice report. The circulation study recommended sidewalk, bus stop and intersection improvements, and these were implemented by DeIDOT in a more immediate timeframe utilizing TE and Safe Routes to School funding. WILMAPCO's greatest concern with TAP is that when it was created in MAP-21, the TE and SRTS funding levels were lowered from their previous levels, which has hampered our ability to implement community projects.

In looking at other areas of need, we see that freight movements, especially by rail, are coming into greater focus at the regional level. In the WILMAPCO region, we are seeing the need to plan for more track capacity as trains transport crude oil from the Western US to refineries on the East Coast, notably the PBF refinery in Delaware City. WILMAPCO is in the process of completing the Chesapeake Connector Freight and Passenger Rail Benefits Study for our partner agencies, MDOT and DeIDOT. One concern with a regional study of this nature is that while this project is important to both MD and DE for freight movement, DeIDOT's capital funding could not be used to for physical improvements in Cecil County, MD. The ability to plan regionally through the MPO is not matched by the ability to spend regionally.

WILMAPCO sees similar challenges in planning for regional passenger transit. We support Amtrak's mission and coordinate with them for local planning projects like the Newark Regional Transportation Center, but when considering city to city passenger services within our region, we work with the Delaware Transit Corporation, SEPTA and MTA's MARC service; however, their capital and operating funds are also separated by state lines. The 20 mile gap in commuter passenger service between MARC trains in Perryville, MD and SEPTA trains in Newark, DE is a constant reminder to WILMAPCO that passenger rail is a regional concern.

At the local level, we struggle to make needed investments in transit for a middle-sized city like Wilmington, DE, and a rural transit agency in Cecil County, MD. As the demographics begin to change in the US, we see both the Boomers and the Millennials finding common ground in transit use, and we see yearly growth in ridership with DART and CCT. Millennial's are no

longer married to their cars – in fact they would give those up before their cherished smart phones. I know, as I have a 26 year-old and a 19 year-old, and both of them would be lost without their phones, but neither of them has ever owned a car, which has made for tricky household transportation planning in the suburban towns of the WILMAPCO region where I live. The new workforce is gravitating to activity centers, cities and towns, just as the empty-nest Boomers are looking for the same lifestyles. These groups are more likely to rent a bicycle than take a taxi, or just walk a few blocks farther to get some exercise. If we do not make the best investments with our transportation funding, those two groups will be moving to regions that provide them with the most varieties of travel modes.

Linking Land Use and Transportation priorities is that much more important in a time when transportation trust funds are running on empty and in a physical landscape that has been dominated by suburban development. WILMAPCO has participated in studies such as the Churchman's Crossing Infrastructure Investment Study and the US 40 Corridor Improvement Study, in which transportation agencies, local and county planners, and elected officials work together in a public forum to create a multi-modal plan for prioritized improvements in transportation with a coordinated land use plan. These projects are located within our region's core investment areas, and the MPO process is an ideal vehicle to facilitate this kind of project collaboration.

In closing, WILMAPCO asks that the new transportation bill build on the successes of SAFETY-LU and MAP-21 to continue and strengthen the focus on collaboration and coordination, which is a hallmark of the MPO process. This type of planning requires time to build relationships and trust, so please give consideration to extending the bill beyond the current two year period, which is shorter than our four year TIP and RTP programs, and providing the program guidance documents with the release of the bill. Please continue to fund the TIGER program, which rewards creative projects and strong local coordination in a very competitive funding format. Another program that would benefit from greater coordination is CMAQ. Our region, like other places across the US, has localized air quality concerns. We feel CMAQ would be more effective in addressing these problems if MPOs were given a more prominent voice in funding decisions. In a time of changing social notions regarding transit and multi-modal transportation, the next transportation bill can provide the programs and the leadership that will be necessary to adapt the US transportation system to meet the changing wants and needs of our residents. Thank You for giving me this time today.