

Wilmington to New Castle Bicycle Highway

Travel Between Wilmington and New Castle Faster By Bicycle Than Car?



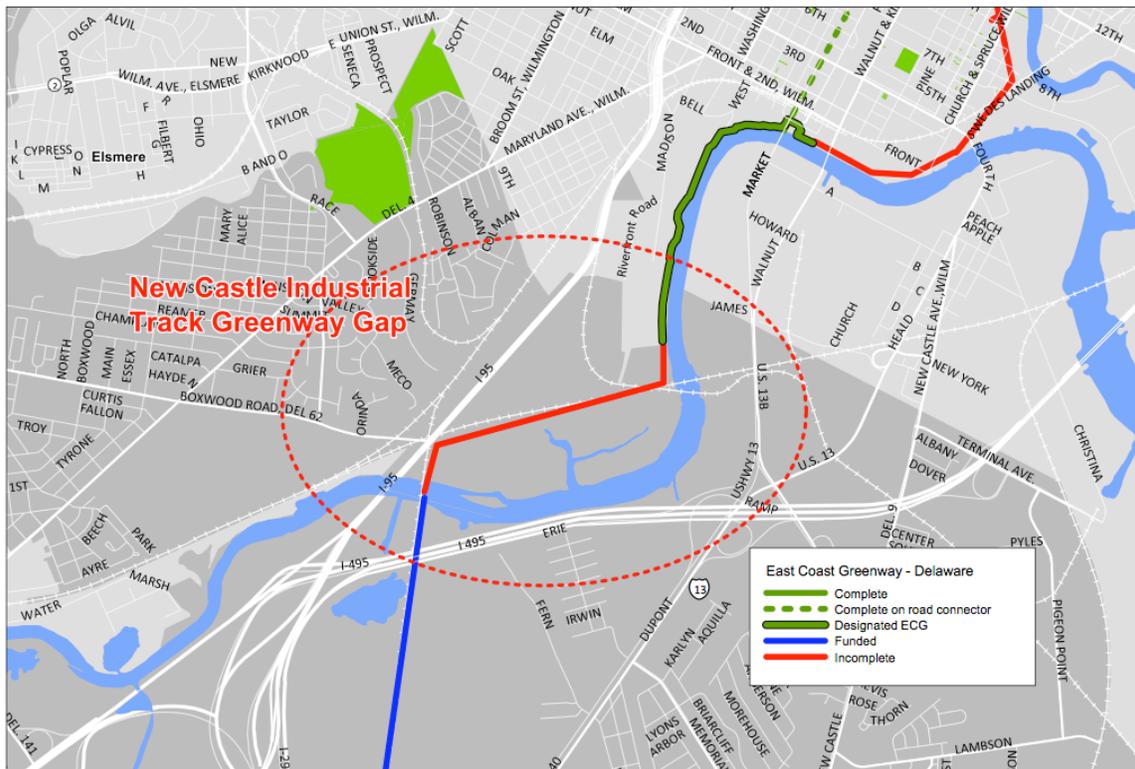
Phase 1 of the New Castle Industrial Track Greenway

After years of planning, effort and investment, a six-mile long “bicycle highway” between Wilmington and New Castle is only **one mile** away from completion. By closing this small remaining gap, Delaware would complete a safe, direct, paved and nearly uninterrupted non-motorized travel route between the Wilmington Riverfront and New Castle. The route will feature a single at-grade road crossing in the entire six miles along an independent right-of-way that became available when the Penn Central Railroad went bankrupt in the 1970s.

Considerable investment has already been made in the route so that now only this small gap remains. The Wilmington Riverwalk currently extends over a mile south from downtown Wilmington towards the Russell Peterson Wildlife Refuge, where it terminates in a dead-end. Similarly, Phase 1 of the New Castle Industrial Track Greenway (built with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds in 2010) and Phase 2 (funded by New Castle County) extend north from old New Castle to the southern edge of the Cristina River. The remaining gap to connect with the Wilmington Riverwalk– which is the third and final phase of the New Castle Industrial Track Greenway – is approximately one mile.

Currently, the only travel options between New Castle and Wilmington for bicyclists are two high speed, high volume arterial roads, Rt. 9 (4 travel lanes) and Rt. 13 (8 travel lanes). Between 2000 and 2008, these roadways had 98 pedestrian crashes, including 8 fatality crashes and 69 injury crashes. A motorized traffic-free, independent right-of-way “bicycle highway” alternative to these busy roads between Wilmington and New Castle will hugely expand the pool of potential

bicycle commuters in the area, while simultaneously offering an active transportation and recreation opportunity to all the adjacent communities along the route.



Final Phase of the New Castle Industrial Track Greenway

Both New Castle County and DeIDOT support connecting the Riverwalk to the New Castle Industrial Track. DeIDOT has given permission and negotiated an arrangement with New Castle County for use of this state owned right-of-way. Further, the Riverwalk and the New Castle Industrial Track are planned to be part of the East Coast Greenway as it passes thru Delaware. DeIDOT hired Whitman, Requardt and Associates in 2010 to complete a feasibility study of the final phase, which will be ready by the summer of 2011.

The Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) is the regional transportation planning agency for Cecil County, Maryland and New Castle County, Delaware. Out of all the bike/ped projects that have been identified in their planning area (which includes all of New Castle County), the WILMAPCO Council has voted this project as their #1 priority project in the bike/ped category.

On August 19, 2010, Delaware's entire congressional delegation also declared its support for the project in a letter of support for a TIGER 2 grant. Sens. Carper, Kaufmann and Rep. Castle wrote to USDOT Secretary LaHood that "[c]losing this gap will strengthen connections between communities, commercial centers, schools and open green spaces and make opportunities for active transportation more readily available and accessible."

To drive between Wilmington and New Castle means stopping at a dozen stop lights on either Rt. 9 or Rt. 13. Could a motivated bicycle rider really go from Wilmington to New Castle faster than a motorist? With the recent passage by the Delaware General Assembly of a Resolution calling for direct investment in building a more walkable and bikeable Delaware, we will soon have an opportunity to find out.

Comments from Community Leaders and Residents

"I am writing this letter in strong support of pushing forward with the planning, engineering, and construction of the Wilmington to New Castle Bicycle Highway. The man-made obstacles of I-95 and I-495 have created a nearly impassable barrier for pedestrian/bicycle traffic to safely move from Wilmington and areas West of Wilmington. From the Prices Corner area a bicyclist has the option of riding into the city on either Kirkwood Highway or Maryland Ave and then out to New Castle on New Castle Ave or risking life and limb by cycling on Route 141 which is simply a death wish. The completed bicycle highway will provide a long awaited safe route for cyclists to travel between the two cities. If the taxpayers can fund roads to every corner of the state it is only fair that we can provide at least a few bicycle routes." Tom Gears, Wilmington.

"As a resident of Wilmington who works in New Castle, the creation of a Wilmington-to-New Castle bicycle highway would improve my quality of life tremendously. I have attempted to commute to work by bicycle, but the only routes available to me feel much too dangerous, especially during rush-hour traffic. If a safe route becomes available, it will allow me to realize my goal of leaving the car at home and bicycling to work to improve both my health and my personal budget. Additionally, I would welcome the ability to bicycle with my wife and children from Wilmington to New Castle for weekend outings. This project would be an enormous leap forward for New Castle County." Shane Hoffman, Wilmington.

"For the past four years, we have commuted by bicycle between Newport and New Castle. With limited ways to safely cross over I-95, we travel through Wilmington instead. We often brave South Market Street, Garasches Lane, Heald Street and New Castle Avenue, the bridges, the roadway debris, and the dilapidated pavement. We race over the I-295 interchange, hoping for light traffic and patient drivers as we make our way down Route 9. The route from Wilmington to New Castle is daunting and challenging, even for experienced cyclists. The challenge is only amplified when there is construction or less-than-ideal weather."

"Completion of the New Castle Industrial Track Greenway will provide safe, non-motorized passage in these areas. It will allow safe, direct access between areas where people work, shop, and live. There is a need for a safe crossing over the Christina River traveling both north and south, the arching railroad overpass on South Market Street, and the I-295 interchange with Route 9. The completion of the NCITG will provide these facilities, and connect existing islands of non-motorized infrastructure in Wilmington and New Castle. It will allow us to safely commute by bicycle on more days, regardless of weather, roadwork, or accidents, and further reduce our carbon footprint. Furthermore, the elimination of real and perceived barriers will encourage less-experienced cyclists to commute by bicycle."

"We urge our state, county, and local officials to support funding for and construction of this project. Please provide this desperately needed connection for non-motorized transportation for the benefit of Delaware's environmental and public health." Rebecca and Todd Keyser, Wilmington.

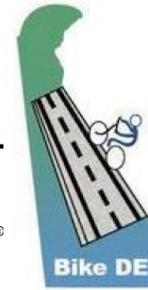
"A six-mile transportation and recreation corridor between the Wilmington Riverfront and old New Castle will bring new visitors and energy (but no new automotive traffic!) to New Castle and will be an important part of the commercial renaissance of the city." Esther Lovlie, President, Historic New Castle Alliance.

"Based on various research from other states, the economic impact and the number of jobs created by tourists traveling and staying overnight strongly supports the great need for Delaware to have the Wilmington to New Castle Greenway completed. In addition, with the National Park proposal, it is safe to bet that we will all see an increase of tourism in and around New Castle County."

"Our Visitor Center provides current biking information and we are always asked to recommend longer rides." Sarah Willoughby, Executive Director, Greater Wilmington and Brandywine Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau.



East Coast
Greenway®



Stephen Kingsberry
Chair
WILMAPCO Council
900 Public Safety Boulevard
Dover, Delaware 19901

June 25, 2010

Dear Chairman Kingsberry,

As representatives of a consortium of Delaware organizations involved with non-motorized transportation, we write to draw your attention to an un-ranked FY 2012-2015 TIP Bicycle/Pedestrian project named “**New Castle Industrial Track/ECGW: Boulden Blvd little league-Wilm Riverwalk**”. At the next meeting of the WILMAPCO Council on July 15, the Council will have an opportunity to prioritize this project. We request that the Council rank this project highly.

The Wilmington Riverwalk extends over a mile south from downtown Wilmington towards the Russell Peterson Wildlife Refuge, where it currently terminates in a dead-end. Similarly, the New Castle Industrial Track Greenway recently built with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds runs north from old New Castle to a little ways beyond Boulden Blvd, where it also terminates in a dead-end. The “New Castle Industrial Track/ECGW: Boulden Blvd little league-Wilm Riverwalk” project would connect these now isolated paths, leveraging investments already made and providing a non-motorized connection between Wilmington and New Castle.

The project is attractive from utility, recreational and tourism points of view. It would complete a safe, direct and nearly uninterrupted non-motorized path for commuters between downtown Wilmington and New Castle. Currently, the only travel options between New Castle and Wilmington for bicyclists are Rt. 9 and Rt. 13, both high speed and high volume roads, which draw only a small number of, on the one hand, highly skilled, experienced, confident and committed bicyclists and, on the other, bicyclists who do not own a car and so are compelled to use these roads because the option to drive is closed to them. A bicycle “highway” between Wilmington and New Castle will hugely expand the pool of potential bicycle commuters in the area.

In addition, when complete the project will support the Wilmington Riverfront as a recreational and leisure destination for everyone who wants to access a long, flat trail that’s free and safe for all for bicycling, including kids, seniors and people with physical disabilities. More, it would also make the Riverfront an easily accessible bicycle destination for people bicycling from the New Castle area. Going in the other direction, it would provide easy access to old New Castle for bicycle tourism originating in Wilmington. In other areas of the country where such 5 to 10 mile

bike paths exist between neighboring towns, it is observed that they are used by individuals and small groups who ride from one town to the other, stop for breakfast or lunch, and then turn around and ride back home. A bike connection with a neighboring town also offers a significant activity for tourists that can provide a reason to prolong a visit and can be something that they can do in an unscheduled way.

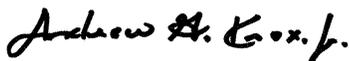
Both New Castle County and DeIDOT support connecting the Riverwalk to the New Castle Industrial Track. DELDOT has given permission for the trail and negotiated an arrangement with New Castle County for use of this state owned right-of-way. Further, the Riverwalk and the New Castle Industrial Track are planned to be part of the East Coast Greenway as it passes thru Delaware. Completion of the "New Castle Industrial Track/ECGW: Boulden Blvd little league-Wilm Riverwalk" would not complete the entire East Coast Greenway (ECGW) in Delaware, but it would close the most critical remaining gap and bring the Delaware portion of the ECGW a giant step forward. Together with the Northern Delaware Greenway, it would also form a spine for off-road bicycling that extends all the way thru Wilmington from north to south.

Very sincerely yours,

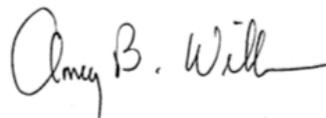


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Ralph Reeb
Kash Srinivasan
Carolann Wicks
Tigist Zegeye

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
JULY 15, 2010**

The meeting was held in the WILMAPCO office, 850 Library Avenue, Newark, Delaware on July 15, 2010.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Joseph L. Fisona, Vice Chairperson, opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL:**

Members present:

Cleon L. Cauley, Delaware Governor's Appointee
Mayor Joseph L. Fisona, Cecil County Municipalities' Representative
Mayor Vance A. Funk III, New Castle County Municipalities' Representative
George Haggerty, alternate for Karl Kalbacher, New Castle County (Executive Chris Coon's Appointee)
James T. Mullin, Cecil County Commissioner
Michael Nixon, MDOT (Alternate for MD Governor's Appointee Donald Halligan)
Ken Potts, alternate for Stephen Kingsberry, Delaware Transit Corporation, Executive Director and Council Chair
Ralph Reeb, DelDOT, Delaware Secretary's Appointee
Kash Srinivasan, City of Wilmington (Mayor Baker's Appointee)

Members absent:

None

Guests, Observers:

Rachel Anderson, Bike Delaware
Bobbi Britton, East Coast Greenway, Delaware
Chris Castagno, Trustees of New Castle Common
Mike Connolly, Historic New Castle Association (HCNA)
Gene Donaldson, DelDOT
Mary Drinan, Bike Delaware
Esther Lovlie, Historic New Castle Association (HCNA)
Mathew Lovlie, Penn's Place, New Castle
Bill Osborne, Springside, LLC
Terry Reilly, TMA Delaware
Maria Ruocco, Bike Delaware
Mark Seitz, Historic New Castle Association (HCNA)
Frank Warnock, Bike Delaware
Amy Wilburn, Delaware Bicycle Council
Sara Willoughby, Greater Wilmington Convention & Visitors Bureau
James Wilson, Bike Delaware

Staff members:

Dan Blevins, Principal Planner
Janet Butler, Executive Assistant
Heather Dunigan, Principal Planner
Tamika Graham, Transportation Planner
Dave Gula, Senior Planner
Janet Jaskinski, Administrative Secretary
Randi Novakoff, Outreach Manager
William Swiatek, Senior Planner
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Minutes prepared by Janet Butler

11. To Approve the Proposed Project Prioritization for FY2012-2015 TIP

Ms. Dunigan said TAC had reviewed priority technical scoring, and it has also gone before the Air Quality Subcommittee (AQS) which reviewed the air quality scoring criteria and proposed CMAQ eligibility list. The Nonmotorized Transportation Working Group reviewed the scoring, supported all projects, and would like to see the gap in the New Castle Industrial Track scored higher. They also recommended sufficient preservation and safety funding. We expect that the DOTs will use this prioritization as they do their statewide scoring.

Some projects have scoring for which staff believes the full merit is not reflected. South Union Street has turned into a paving project that we wouldn't normally score. We recommended that these pieces of the project be added back in the list using funds from TE program.

Ms. Dunigan described the scoring priorities for several other items such as the Elkton Road project, which remains a high priority for Newark; and the US Rt. 13 – Claymont transportation plan implementation, which remains a priority for that community; the SR 9 project is scoped as a preservation paving project, but, because of the expense of paving a concrete roadway, it should be a management project with full multi-modal roadway improvements incorporated in it; and all final three projects on the arterial list are in City of New Castle, which remain high priorities because they anticipate increased traffic from national park plan.

Mr. Srinivasan asked if we are approving a new prioritization method. Ms. Zegeye clarified that we are working on a list of projects for the FY2012 TIP. Ms. Dunigan said in previous years Council had approved this process. Technical scores have been updated with the most current

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data. For instance, the safety scores reflect the latest crash numbers and the CMS scores reflect the latest CMS document.

Mr. Reeb commented that what is missing for #98 – New Castle Industrial Track phase 3 is that we need to know the next steps, such as how would it go, and how much would it cost to get from the River to the end of the Riverwalk.

Ms. Dunigan agreed and said, the challenge is to get across the river, and the choices across the river are either wetlands or getting close to the rail right of way; further, both of these options are not easy to accomplish.

Mr. Reeb suggested staff work with the County and the Department of Transportation to fund an engineering study and then find out what the costs really are. He said for most of the projects on the prioritization list we know what the cost are but, with this project, we are not sure.

Mr. Haggerty asked if we have to cross the Amtrak line in order to connect the trail. Mr. Potts said no, it would connect with the Wildlife Refuge crossing.

Ms. Dunigan said perhaps we can break the project out in the ranking as both an engineering study and also as construction. Ms. Dunigan further clarified that the Council would be approving the prioritization in order of technical score with the addition of an engineering study for the New Castle Industrial Track to Riverwalk Gap moved to #1 within the Bike/Ped category.

ACTION: On motion by Mr. Srinivasan, seconded by Mr. Funk, the Council approved the Project Prioritization for FY2012-2015 TIP using the order of technical score, the added engineering study for the New Castle Industrial Track Gap at #1 in the Bike/Ped category.

Motion Passed

(10-7-15 – 04)

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 19, 2010

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood,

We are writing to urge your consideration of an application submitted by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation Natural Resources for a TIGER 2 Discretionary Grant. The program is called Generating Recovery by Enhancing Active Transportation in the Mid-Atlantic region (GREAT-Mid-Atlantic) to build trail segments in Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey and it will enhance major trail and pedestrian/bikeway corridors in those states.

Currently, this trail corridor is hampered by the critical gap between the Wilmington Riverwalk and the recently completed phase 1 of the New Castle Industrial Track Greenway. Closing this gap will strengthen connections between communities, commercial centers, schools and open green spaces and make opportunities for active transportation more readily available and accessible.

This application proposes to construct thirty important rural and urban trail, greenway and bicycle and pedestrian segments that will close gaps in and create greater connectivity among seven major trail corridors. In Delaware, the application includes engineering plans for a key gap in the New Castle to Wilmington Industrial Track Greenway to provide for a traffic free route between historic New Castle and Downtown Wilmington.

This application will enhance efforts at the state and local level to create connected greenways to provide sustainable transportation routes and to improve recreational amenities. Closing gaps in the seven Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey trail systems and urban complete street networks will enhance livability in many urban and rural communities.

Once a decision has been reached or if further information is required, please contact us through our respective staff members: Mr. Josh Magarik of Senator Carper's office may be reached at (302) 573-6291; Mr. Brian Horsey of Senator Kaufman's office may be reached at (302) 573-6345; and Ms. Erin Innes of Congressman Castle's office may be reached at (302) 428-1902.

Sincerely,


Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Edward E. Kaufman
United States Senator

Michael N. Castle
Member of Congress