

## Notes and Links from HOT TOPIC January 25, 2023: The Importance of VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled) an Exploration of Climate, Health, Land Use and Community

*Hosted by the LWVDE Land Use and Transportation Committee*

*Panelists:* Bill Swiatek (WILMAPCO), Pamela Steinebach (Delaware Dept of Transportation), Rich Hall (Land Use Manager for New Castle County)

To meeting attendees: It was an exciting meeting with your engagement and great questions. Here are some of the **main points** and at the bottom of this document you will find **links** that were shared in the chat.

### MAIN POINTS:

- Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) measures the total miles driven in an area and reflects the local level of dependency on vehicular transportation. The most accurate understanding of VMT over time will adjust for population changes. DELDOT does track VMT in Delaware and numbers have continued to slightly outpace population growth especially in Sussex County.
- There are many benefits from reducing VMT - a lower VMT means that people are driving less and likely choosing alternatives such as active transportation (walking and biking) and public transportation.
  - Vehicular travel is the leading source of greenhouse gasses, so reduced VMT helps prevent climate change.
  - Providing more active transportation opportunities results in people getting more exercise and in more community connections.
- Land use policies can make alternatives to vehicular travel possible, especially:
  - Increased density which makes providing public transit and walking/biking infrastructure economically feasible.
  - Mixed zoning to bring homes, work places and shopping within walkable/bikeable distance and to create pathways that are pleasant with attractions.
- Transportation planning can increase connectivity with walkability and bikeability
  - WILMAPCO is working to improve opportunities for students to walk and bike to school in the Rte 9 corridor by creating safe ways over and around barriers such as major road crossings.
  - Focusing on increasing vehicular speed, through current approaches to transportation planning such as Level of Service (LOS) and Transportation Improvement Districts (TID), can increase VMT. DELDOT currently does not consider VMT in transportation planning.
- Barriers: Public opposition is a common challenge to reducing VMT via land use policy and transportation.
  - Dense and mixed use zoning is often opposed publicly due to concerns about property values and traffic.
  - Fears of increased traffic results in more, bigger and faster roads
- What can we do? Public support for policies that will support reducing VMT will be key.

- We can attend planning meetings.
  - Coming up soon Feb 8 (see link below) the public can support lowering VMT--WILMAPCO has proposed reducing VMT in their most recent 2050 Regional Transportation Plan update
- We can continue to educate and advocate for these policies. Ms. Steinebach commented she has not been approached on the topic of VMT reduction in a public setting before and that public engagement on the topic will be the way to have impact.

LINKS:

- You can provide input Feb 8 from 4:00 to 7:00 pm re the WILMAPCO Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) - here's a screenshot for the meeting and links below:

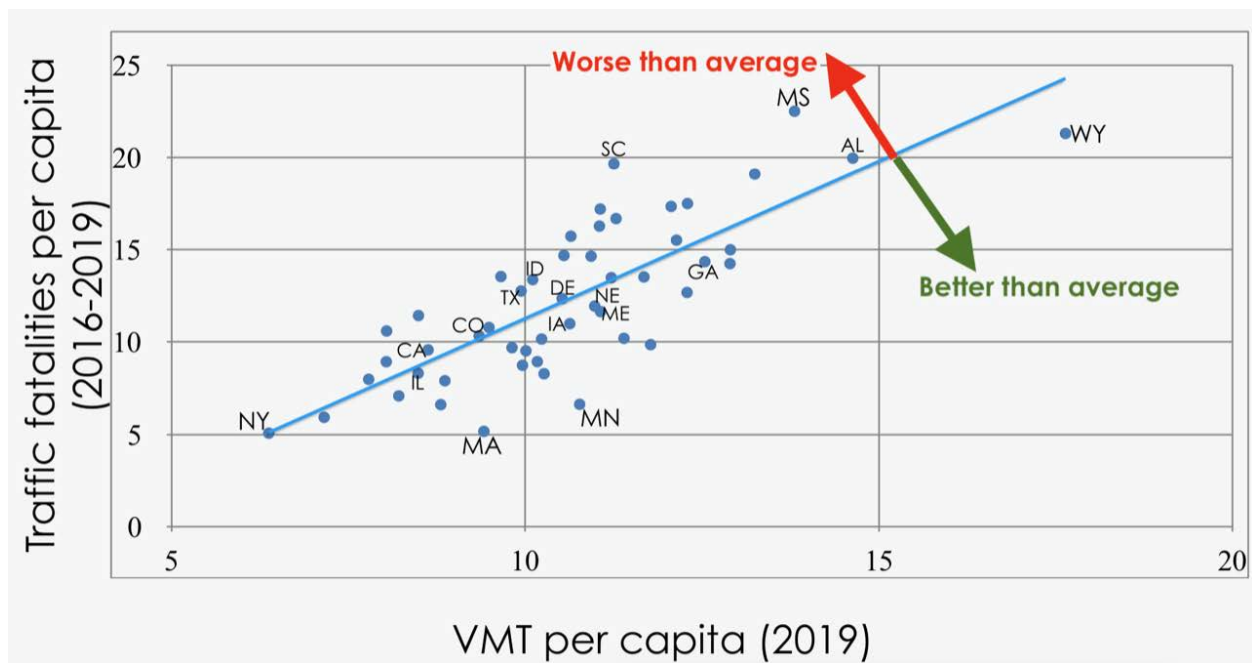
- **Now is your chance to influence the future!**

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to get around in New Castle County, Delaware or Cecil County, Maryland in the next twenty years? How congested will it be? Will you be able to walk or bike safely, and use public transportation? What types of transportation improvements should be the priority? These are the types of questions that are at the heart of the **2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) 2023 Update, which is being released for public review and comment through March 6, 2023 .**

- Read the RTP here: <http://www.wilmapco.org/rtp/>
- Register here: <http://www.wilmapco.org/ourtown/>
- Here is the reference Bill Swiatek shared with us about Delaware's RAISE Grant funding for residents along Route 9 to improve multimodal transportation and overcome barriers including major highways transecting the community:
  - <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022-08/RAISE-Delaware-2022.pdf>
- Here is the DART Reimagined public meeting - looks like it was actually at 2 pm on 1/25/23 right after the Hot Topic (maybe a recording or notes will be available):  
<https://www.deldot.gov/About/publicevents/workshops/index.shtml?dc=workshop&id=16679>
- Here are links re public microtransit vs. fixed route public transit provided by James Wilson:

- <https://humantransit.org/2018/02/is-microtransit-a-sensible-transit-investment.html>
- <https://humantransit.org/2018/02/microtransit-what-i-think-we-know.html>

- Here is the graph provided by James Wilson showing a correlation between increasing VMT and increasing traffic fatalities:



Graphic: Provided by Bike Delaware, data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (National Highway Safety Transportation Administration <https://www.nhtsa.gov/research-data/fatality-analysis-reporting-system-fars>)