

# **PUTTING THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW TO WORK: THE STATE AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES**

## **SENATE EPW COMMITTEE WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

### **SECRETARY NICOLE MAJESKI, DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2022**

#### **Introduction**

Thank you, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today.

I am Nicole Majeski, and I have the privilege of serving as the Secretary of Transportation for Delaware and representing our more than 2,500 employees statewide. I would like to thank Senator Carper for this invitation and for his constant support of the important infrastructure work we are doing across our home state. The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) is committed to providing excellence in transportation and carrying out Governor Carney's vision of making Delaware a more equitable and inclusive state. Safe, reliable, and accessible transportation is a key component in delivering equitable access to employment, education, health care, and recreation.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is a much-needed investment of additional federal dollars to our country's transportation infrastructure. We are grateful to the Biden administration and the members of Congress for this historic program that will ensure our roads and bridges are safe and well maintained, our communities are better served and connected, and that we are making the necessary investments for the electrification of our infrastructure and resiliency due to climate change.

These projects are critically important not only to the traveling public, but to the thousands of people employed in the construction industry across our state.

Having this bill finalized gives state DOTs and our contractor community certainty that we will continue to make needed infrastructure investments in the years ahead.

The \$1.6 billion in federal funding that Delaware is receiving through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), along with our committed state resources will allow us to deliver our largest capital program of ever of \$4.45 billion over the next five years. BIL funding is instrumental to many initiatives in Delaware and I'll be highlighting a few of them today.

#### **Resiliency, Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship**

As the lowest-lying state in the nation, Delaware is seeing firsthand the effects that climate change and sea-level rise are having on our state. We are increasingly seeing roads in our coastal areas overtopped with water not just during significant storms but with tidal flooding on sunny days. We estimate that we have one billion dollars' worth of infrastructure that is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and as part of our state's Climate Action Plan that Governor John Carney announced last fall, we created the Resiliency and Sustainability Division within DelDOT to centralize our efforts to improve the resiliency of our transportation network and focus on sustainability. This division is focusing on the impacts climate change and sea-level rise are having

on our transportation infrastructure; incorporating resiliency and sustainability measures in the construction and maintenance of our projects; implementing the electrification of our infrastructure and fleet; incorporating the use of alternative energy; and minimizing the environmental impacts caused by our transportation system.

This division will guide our work to develop solutions for these impacted areas and lead initiatives such as the broader electrification of our infrastructure to support and encourage the use of electric vehicles in Delaware. Newly created formula funding through PROTECT, Carbon Reduction and EV Infrastructure will allow us to move forward with these critical projects.

### **Continue the Deployment of Electric Buses**

Speaking of electrification and climate change, the Delaware Transit Corporation, our transit agency, has set goals to reduce fleet emissions by 50% by the year 2030 and eliminate all fleet emissions by 2040. We will soon be operating twenty-six (26) electric buses to serve our customers, which is approximately 11% of our fleet. These electric buses replace diesel buses and significantly reduce emissions. Through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we were recently awarded a Low-No Grant, which will add two more electric buses to our fleet as well as two overhead chargers and one large charger that would contain as many as 16 individual chargers. With the latest FTA Bus Facility Grant we were awarded to modernize the Rehoboth Park & Ride, we will be installing an in-route charger, standalone electric bus chargers, and solar panels over the parking lots and connecting them to a self-sustaining microgrid, which will be the first for a transit facility in the country.

### **Hydrogen Buses**

Expanding upon our investment in electric buses, we also have plans to introduce hydrogen buses into our fleet. With extended range and faster fueling, Hydrogen Fuel Cell buses offer an advantage over Battery-Electric Buses and will play a critical role in our ability to seamlessly deliver our transit services across the state. With the recent Low-No Grant awarded to DTC by FTA, we will be purchasing two hydrogen buses and installing our first hydrogen fueling station.

### **Electrification of Delaware's Infrastructure**

In addition to deploying electric buses, the department will start incorporating more all-electric vehicles into our fleet, as well as installing electric charging stations statewide. In 2022, we will have installed 75 electric charging station units at all of our public facing facilities including park-n-rides, transit centers, visitor centers and the DelDOT campus. With the recently approved National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Plan, DelDOT will be receiving \$17.6M over five years for the planning, development, and construction of new fast charging stations across the state. This effort is in partnership with the Delaware Department of Natural Resource and Environmental Control (DNREC) to deploy fast chargers at strategic locations starting with our designated Alternative Fuel Corridors (I-95, SR 1, US 13, and US 113). After those corridors have been built out, the focus will pivot to adding charging stations in communities and to those who do not have charging stations conveniently located in their homes such as multi-unit apartment complexes.

## **Equity in Transportation**

Our efforts to improve our transportation system extend beyond a focus on infrastructure alone. DelDOT is committed to ensuring that transportation is equitable and accessible for everyone. We are focused on equity in transportation for our customers, our contractors and consultants and our staff. To fully have equity in transportation we must ensure that our projects are connecting communities, not dividing them; investing and providing services equitably; improving and expanding transit services to those who rely on them; identifying and closing gaps in our system; supporting and investing in our Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms; and recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce that is representative of our state.

### **Mapping**

With the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the emphasis on equity and Justice 40 initiatives, we felt it was critically important for our decision making to have accurate and detailed mapping of disadvantaged communities in Delaware. With input from many stakeholders, we have acquired the applicable data and it is being mapped using Geographic Information System (GIS). We plan to use the data paired with a variety of other transportation data to assess our projects and initiatives and target future transportation improvements. We are also working toward making this data available across the state for others to review and use for their areas of interest and programs.

### **Route 9 Corridor**

As we look to address inequities in our transportation system, we recently received two grants for the Route 9 corridor to assist us in planning transportation and transit improvements within this census-defined low-income area. The Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant from the Federal Transit Administration will allow us to do extensive community outreach, plan transit and multi-modal connections and look at opportunities to improve safety along the corridor. The Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Grant from the Federal Highway Administration will assist us in developing 12 projects along the Route 9 corridor that address safety issues and improve equity of access to all modes of transportation for the local communities.

### **I-95 Capping Feasibility Study**

When I-95 was constructed through Wilmington in the 1960's, it divided the city and the negative impacts are still felt today. One of our metropolitan planning organizations (MPO), WILMAPCO, is leading the effort to study the feasibility of capping a half mile section of I-95. The existing street grid creates five potential areas that could be capped. These five areas differ in size and create an opportunity for multiple concepts to be developed utilizing some, or all, of these spaces to create new connections between neighborhoods and result in new public spaces for the residents.

The study will result in one or more concepts for a cap over I-95. These concepts will range from short-term improvements to remove vehicular traffic, increase pedestrian/bike access, and increasing green space to long-term improvements of creating a complete cap. Once there is consensus amongst stakeholders regarding the study's recommendations, DelDOT will begin seeking funding and designing the project(s). The study should wrap up later this year. We hope that we can show some quick wins with closures of the recommended side streets and lane

reductions on the parallel streets (Jackson Street and/or Adams Street) adjacent to I-95 while the cap is being designed. We will rely on federal funding and grants to deliver these important projects that will reconnect and revitalize this portion of Wilmington.

### Safety

Last year was the deadliest year on our roadways in over 15 years with 139 fatalities. To date this year, we have seen 106 fatalities, which is 19% more than this same time last year. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) 2022 first quarter analysis of fatalities nationwide, Delaware was leading the country in the percentage increase year over year...a statistic we do not want to be first in.

DelDOT, Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS) and the Office of Highway Safety (OHS) continue to work to implement the recommendations of the Delaware's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) that focus on our eight emphasis areas.

Over the next six years, DelDOT's capital improvement program will invest \$283.0M in the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), Hazard Elimination Program (HEP) and other safety projects across the state which includes intersection improvements, median barrier installation, horizontal curve safety, lighting, mumble strips, and the installation of high friction surface treatment. We also continue to work with legislators to address neighborhood speeding and other safety concerns through our Traffic Calming Program.

The safety of our most vulnerable roadway users, including pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists continues to be our focus. We are investing \$103.4M in our Bike and Pedestrian Program over the next six years to improve safety with projects that provide separate bike and pedestrian facilities, create safe walking and biking routes to schools and provide safe transit access. We will also continue our education efforts for pedestrian, bicycle and motorcyclist safety through campaigns and bike safety checkpoints.

While the Safe Streets and Roads for All program is not available to state DOTs, we are pleased to be supporting the City of Wilmington on their application. Wilmington is the hub of the largest urban area in Delaware. The city has a high concentration of walking and bicycling activity while serving as the center of Delaware's bus and rail networks. Combined with high motor vehicle traffic accessing the city's employment centers, this creates significant safety concerns.

Because DelDOT owns and maintains most of the higher-volume streets in Wilmington, it is critical for us to offer our support to the city in this effort. A high percentage of city residents walk, bike, or ride transit as their primary mode of transportation. These people, many of whom are low-income or are from traditionally underserved groups, are disproportionately represented in traffic crashes. By participating in the City's development of a safety action plan, DelDOT can play a key role in making sure residents, as well as workers and visitors, can safely reach their destinations regardless of how they travel. Further, improving safety for all groups and all modes in Wilmington has benefits that support other regional goals and strategies such as economic development, climate change mitigation, and quality of life.

## **Conclusion**

In Delaware, under Governor Carney's leadership, we are committed to improving safety, reducing our emission levels and developing a multi-modal transportation that is equitable. The components of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will allow us to achieve these goals.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today before the Committee.