

Questions and Answers

What is Moving Delaware Forward?

Managing local traffic is a major concern for Delaware residents. According to the 2015 Community Attitudes Survey, half are dissatisfied with the amount of traffic congestion, and one in four is dissatisfied with the condition of Delaware streets. Moving Delaware Forward is City Council's vision to address those concerns by focusing on two core areas: maintenance to improve street conditions and transportation improvements to relieve congestion.

What is the vision for transportation improvements?

Proposed are projects that reduce congestion and improve the overall efficiency of our street network. City Council, with community input, has identified priority projects out of more than 50, including:

- **The Point:** Establishes four-lane capacity below a new railway structure, including pedestrian access on both sides of the roadway. This will reduce congestion for both Central Avenue and William Street.
- **Merrick Boulevard Extension:** Provide a direct connection to Troy Road for west and north side residents, and a more direct route to US 23. This will reduce traffic congestion along West Central Avenue and on Troy Road.
- **Valleyside Drive Extension:** Link William Street and Central Avenue. Doing so will reduce traffic and delay on West Central Avenue and along Houk Road, and improve emergency service response times by trimming over 1 mile of travel distance to William Street neighborhoods.

What is the City's vision for street maintenance?

Though 46 percent of all Delaware streets are local roads, only 19 percent of the resurfacing effort since 2000 has gone toward repairing local neighborhood streets. The majority of funds are targeted for larger arterial and collector streets, as they generally carry more vehicles at higher speeds. Moving Delaware Forward will quadruple the amount of dollars allocated to resurfacing neighborhood streets. In addition, funding will be used to replace and upgrade traffic signals, street lighting and crash barriers. Residents surveyed also said traffic signal timing is an issue; the plan calls for optimizing timing along corridors throughout the city.

How many miles of roads are in Delaware?

There are just over 161 miles of roadway, of which 80 are local streets within residential neighborhoods.

What is being proposed?

City Council is proposing an income tax increase to fund Moving Delaware Forward. The tax rate would increase 0.15-percent, from 1.85 percent to 2.0 percent. For a family with a household income of \$50,000 a year, the new rate would cost about \$75 additionally per year, or roughly \$6 per month. The additional tax would generate about \$2.2 million annually and be combined with what already is being spent on transportation – about \$1,920,000 per year – for a total amount of \$4,120,000 for Moving Delaware Forward. The new tax would be permanent. Keep in mind, however, that the current 0.15-percent recreation tax will expire in about 10 years. When that happens, our overall tax rate will drop back to 1.85 percent.

Specifically, how will the funds be used?

(1) For maintenance and resurfacing, and increasing parking capacity; (2) for transportation connections; and (3) to leverage additional state and federal dollars to undertake "big ticket" projects – The Point, for example – that because of their cost require additional outside funding sources.

Is East Central Avenue part of this plan?

Yes. Plans call for widening and reconstructing the pavement to handle current and future traffic. Additional funds generated through a levy would provide the local matching contribution needed to apply for and receive federal funds for this project.

Is a bypass part of this plan?

A bypass will require significantly more funding than a levy can generate. But just having available the local match money that a levy will generate could advance a bypass project in future years.

Will bike paths be a part of the plan?

Yes, along new roadway links like the Merrick Boulevard Extension, safely connecting residents to Smith Park, and along the Valleyside Drive Extension, where surrounding neighborhoods and the approximately 11,000 residents would have a connection to shopping, parks and the YMCA.

Who is responsible for building and maintaining roads in the City of Delaware?

In general, the city is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of all roads within city limits, including state and county routes. An exception is the cost of resurfacing US23, which is managed through ODOT.

How does Delaware currently pay for transportation improvements?

We use county, state and federal grants, the state gas tax and state license fees, and city income tax.

Why does Delaware need more money?

Our ability to maintain the current transportation system is not sustainable given funding levels. The program must include a more comprehensive resurfacing effort that addresses local streets and reverses the downward trend in pavement condition. In addition, there are more than 50 improvement projects within the city's transportation plans that would improve the efficiency of our network.

Can't you just ban trucks from certain roads?

Banning trucks simply to get them out of the way isn't realistic. The federal government would oppose such action, even for short periods of time, because of interstate commerce considerations. In addition, such a prohibition would force trucks onto less suitable roads and side streets. Even if there was a way to remove all trucks from streets, this would not solve all of our problems; at The Point, for example, trucks account for only about 8-10 percent of total volume during peak morning and afternoon drive times.

Which streets are in the best condition, and which are in the worst condition? Generally speaking, larger roads that carry a majority of vehicles at higher speeds are in better condition. According to the rating system, major arterial and collector streets are being maintained at a grade of B+. Local streets, specifically those not recently constructed as part of a newer subdivision, have a grade of C- and continue to decline as maintenance is deferred due to lack of funding.

Why a permanent levy?

Maintaining a transportation network is ongoing, requiring continuous and expanding maintenance and resources. Certain projects – fixing an intersection, for example – have fixed costs. Others – street resurfacing and traffic equipment – require annual effort for as long as the infrastructure is in use. Annual revenue will advance Moving Delaware Forward and sustain that effort over time to ensure our transportation system keeps up with growth.

How much does it cost to repave 1 mile of road?

It depends on the condition of the pavement. If the subbase is generally in good condition and only the surface pavement is being replaced, the work can be completed for about \$300,000. If the road subbase requires more extensive work, the same mile of street can cost about \$500,000 to repair.

How much does it cost to build 1 mile of road?

Construction costs per mile depend on location, terrain, type of construction, number of lanes, durability, etc. Nonetheless, estimates to construct a two-lane curbed street can range from \$750 to \$1,000 per foot or about \$4-5 million per mile.

Do we spend more money building roads or repairing roads?

The majority of funding is used to repair roads. Although there is new roadway construction taking place, this is typically funded privately in association with ongoing development activities.

What might happen if a levy fails?

Neighborhood streets will continue to degrade with no means to slow this from occurring. This will impact safety and housing values as streets become increasingly patched with pothole repairs and crack fillers. Without system-wide signal upgrades, the 15-year old programming will become less and less effective in managing the traffic, leading to increased delay. Lastly, major project initiatives such as The Point or East Central Ave. reconstruction are unlikely to receive federal funding if we are unable to fund the local contribution.

Dear Residents.

Thank you for your interest in this important issue. Please contact us for more information.

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