



South Wilmington PLANNING NETWORK

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December 6, 2017

Mayor Michael Purzycki
City of Wilmington
800 French Street
Wilmington, DE 19801

RE: New Sweden Road Extension

Dear Mayor,

The South Wilmington Planning Network (SWPN) wrote to DeIDOT back in 2011 calling for, “. . . improved east-west roadway, pedestrian, bicycle and public transit connectivity from the new bridge into Southbridge” in keeping with recommendations from WILMAPCO’s 2008 Southbridge Circulation Study and the 2006 South Wilmington Neighborhood Plan. Our aim was to shed light on the ongoing imbalance of public funding to finance the redevelopment and gentrification of Wilmington’s Riverfront, illustrated in this recent case by the new Christina River Bridge (CRB), with the limited redevelopment support for the nearby Southbridge neighborhood.

The SWPN was pleased that both DeIDOT and the City of Wilmington began work to genuinely address this imbalance in projects and spending. DeIDOT’s “Garasches Lane” project came about to address environmental justice concerns stemming from the CRB by giving Southbridge better links into the Riverfront – along A Street, the wetland park trail, and another new or better link in the south. As the Wilmington Initiatives group began examining Garasches Lane as that southern connection link, they quickly realized it was not optimal to retrofit as a pedestrian/bike or car link. It has space limitations and an uncomfortable and unsafe industrial environment with big trucks.

The City, instead, put forth a proposal to construct a new street network south and east of the wetland park to the west of Southbridge. This work, capped by the “New Sweden Road Extension” would not only serve as a brand-new and direct connection between Southbridge and the CRB, but open opportunities for economic redevelopment along the sides of the new roadway. These plans were presented multiple times to Southbridge leadership and community members, with generally positive feedback apart from the proposed name of the road itself.



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It is disappointing to hear that you do not support this optimal southern connection. While the SWPN strongly supports significant upgrades to A Street and the new daytime trail which will run through the wetland park, we urge the City and DeIDOT to reconsider the New Sweden Road Extension and Church Street Extension elements of the original proposal. Garasches Lane should receive a needed repave, but not be the primary southern personal travel link from Southbridge to the Riverfront. The original work, as proposed, would more closely tie Southbridge in with the Riverfront, open opportunities for redevelopment, and most fully address the environmental justice concerns created by the CRB project.

Most of all, while we understand shifting priorities and the need to best prioritize investments across the city, we encourage future decisions to be made with public consultation. As noted above, the optimal proposal was presented several times publicly. Pulling it away now, without any discussion, will create local confusion.

The SWPN is a collaborative partnership of Southbridge residents and government, nonprofit and private agencies. The mission of the Network is to serve as a vehicle for information-sharing and the leveraging of resources on collaborative projects to improve the community's quality of life.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (267) 737-8873 or via email at brittsalen@ejinitiative.org.

Sincerely,

Brittany Salen

South Wilmington Planning Network, Chair

CCs:

Jennifer Cohan, DeIDOT

Jeff Flynn, City of Wilmington

David Gula, WILMAPCO

Herb Inden, City of Wilmington