

# DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

## Highlights of the Central New Jersey Transportation Forum Meeting of December 5, 2002

### Attendees (64):

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
George Alexandridis	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Rosemarie Anderson	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Nicholas Angarone	Mercer County Planning
John Araneo	French and Parrello Associates, P.A.
Peter Bilton	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Dianne Brake	Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
Sue Burrows	New Jersey Future
David Campbell	Princeton Packet
Peter A. Cantu	Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc., Plainsboro Township
Ronald Carle	Dewberry-Goodkind, Inc.
Jon Carnegie	Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute
Andrew Carten	City of Trenton
Paul Cohn	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Susan Conlon	Princeton Junction Communities
John Coscia	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Jon Edwards	Hopewell Township
Barbara Evans	West Windsor Township
Emi Faloughi	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Ed Fox	New Jersey Office of Smart Growth
Doug Freudenrich	Michael Baker Jr., Incorporated
Victor Furmanec	Dresdner Robin
Hamid Ghadimy	New Jersey Turnpike
Basil Giletto	Mercer County Chamber of Commerce
Sergio Gomtas	New Jersey Governor's Office
Pam Hersh	Princeton University
Shing Fu Hsueh	West Windsor Township
Jack Kanarek	New Jersey Transit
Dennis Keck	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Katherine Kish	Princeton Area Chamber of Commerce
Miki Krakauer	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Michael LaPlace	Plainsboro Township
Donna Lewis	Mercer County
Bruce Looloian	Advance Realty
Phyllis Marchand	Princeton Township

Thomas Marchwinski	New Jersey Transit
Craig Marshall	South Brunswick Township Planning Board
Frank McCartney	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Tony McCracken	Somerset County
Hon. James McGreevey	Governor, New Jersey
Alison Miller	West Windsor Township
Jack Molenaar	Plainsboro Township
Pam Mount	Lawrence Township
Diane Murphy-Atkins	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Deirdre Naughton	New Jersey Governor's Office
Dan Nolan	Bristol-Myer Squibb
Julius Oroszvary	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
George Padgett	Hopewell Borough
David Parris	Penns Neck
Stanley Platt	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Pete Rayner	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Marvin Reed	Princeton Borough
Sarah Roberts	Montgomery Township
Roger Sager	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
David Schellinger	URS Corporation
Walter Schmidlin	Sarnoff Corporation
Don Shanis	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Lee Solow	Princeton Regional Planning Board
Linda Spalinski	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Ron Tindall	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)
Paul Truban	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Kenneth Wedeen	Somerset County Planning
Kelvin Werth	Penns Neck
Louise Wilson	Montgomery Township
Bob Wolfe	Princeton Forrestal Center

*The meeting of the Central Jersey Transportation Forum took place on Thursday December 5, 2002 at Sarnoff Corporation in Princeton, NJ. The Honorable James E. McGreevey addressed the Forum. The Forum adopted the Phase 1 Executive Summary that was presented at the last meeting. A motion was adopted to form a sub-committee to proceed with the BRT proposal for the region. The legislative committee reported on action agenda items. An update on the progress of the Penns Neck Area Environmental Impact Study was given. The results of the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission Southerly Crossings were presented. In the interest of time and inclement weather the presentation on US 1 Cordon Study was postponed. Members of the Forum reported on the activities taking place in the region. The meeting concluded with*

*Mr. Coscia thanking Sarnoff for their hospitality and announcing the next meeting date, Friday February 21, 2003.*

John Coscia, Executive Director of DVRPC, called the meeting to order. He welcomed attendees and thanked Sarnoff for hosting the Forum meeting. Dennis Keck, Assistant Commissioner, NJDOT was introduced to the group as co-chair of the meeting.

Mr Coscia pointed to the additional items in the meeting folder. A newspaper article that appeared in the December 3, 2002 *Trenton Times* which referred to a proposed development of the Wyeth site in West Windsor. The DVRPC newsletter and another DVRPC publication, a newsletter dedicated to Environmental Justice, Environmental Justice is a federal requirement and should be considered for all projects using federal funds.

### **Summary of the August Meeting's Highlights**

Mr. Coscia asked for amendments to the highlights of the August 1, 2002 Forum meeting. The highlights were approved as written.

### **Phase 1 Executive Summary**

Don Shanis, Deputy Director, Transportation Planning, DVRPC briefly described the *Phase 1 Executive Summary* which was presented and distributed at the August 1, 2002 Forum meeting. He told the gathering that the intent was to endorse by adopting the document as official. The *Executive Summary* is divided in four sections and summarizes the background of the Forum, the planning process, the modeling process, the findings, and presents recommendations. The process showed that the growth in the area was more than predicted, most of the congestion was local in nature, light rail transit (LRT) was not viable as tested, land use played a major role and incentives were needed to change behavior. The conclusion was that a balanced approach was needed to have any noticeable effect on congestion in the region. Improvements were needed in highway, transit, land-use and transportation demand management (TDM) strategies.

Dianne Brake, Director, Regional Planning Partnership asked how the report would be used.

Mr. Coscia replied that it would be the corner stone for the Forum's future work.

There was a motion to adopt the *Phase 1 Executive Summary*. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Municipal Outreach Update**

Don Shanis told the Forum that staff from DVRPC, NJ Transit, NJDOT and Greater Mercer TMA had met with five municipalities in the study region. The purpose of the meetings were two-fold, first to discuss the municipal vision – proposed development, transportation and land use problems and proposals and second to discuss the proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) which had been modeled and presented at the last Forum meeting.

The municipalities recognized that they would be facing major congestion problems in the future. However, the Forum's preliminary BRT initiative met with mixed results with core municipalities within the study area more sold on the idea of BRT than municipalities on the fringes of the study area.

Mr. Shanis in relating some specific municipal concerns told the members that location of park and ride lots were an issue, the general consensus was that these lots should be placed further away from the core areas to capture passengers earlier before they get too close to the core area. Smaller park and ride lots were more favorable, more community friendly. Land use is a key issue along with transit friendly design of the development to be served. The townships wanted a resilient BRT system that had the potential, if necessary to be converted to LRT in the future. They felt there is a need to expand focus beyond BRT to investigate other viable congestion management solutions. It was generally agreed that the private sector be included during the initial planning stages. Municipalities suggested more should be done to focus on the issues municipalities would face in instituting the recommended congestion management solutions.

An action item was proposed to establish a BRT sub-committee to oversee and advance the BRT concept.

Marvin Reed, Mayor, Princeton Borough said the presentation made by Mr. Shanis was general and generic and did not reflect what was discussed at the meeting with the Princeton Borough and Township. They are not ready to sign on to the plan that was discussed. Before Princeton would agree to a BRT system coming into Princeton there has to be more comprehensive planning as to how it works. Mr. Reed said the plans, as it is, currently does not serve the region well and it does not address the overall congestion problem identified by the Forum.

Peter Cantu, Mayor, Plainsboro Township asked Mayor Reed if he was suggesting that we go back and re-evaluate it. He went on to say that the forum had spent a lot of time developing the current system.

Mayor Reed replied that the current plan was dependent on land use changes and there is no indication by the municipalities that there will be any changes that will make BRT viable.

Mr. Coscia reminded the Forum that there is no moving ahead on this issue without consensus.

Shing Fu Hsueh, Mayor, West Windsor Township told the Forum that the process had to start somewhere. He said transit friendly design was already incorporated into West Windsor's master plan and that disagreement on BRT, which is worthy of study, should not be central focus of committee.

Pam Mount, Deputy Mayor, Lawrence Township believes a resolution that is truly regional in scope is necessary. Trenton and New Brunswick need to be included to have that regional impact.

Mr. Coscia reiterated the action item asking if there were any objections if "in addition to evaluating land use and zoning changes required" were added to the resolution.

Mayor Reed said there is no objection to moving ahead with the concept, it is the alignment with which he objected to.

Mr. Coscia called for adoption of the motion with the changes. The motion was carried unanimously.

### **Governor James McGreevey – Smart Growth Initiatives**

Mr. Coscia introduced Governor McGreevey to the Forum members. He then introduced Bob Wolfe, Manager, Princeton Forrestal Center and chairman of the Legislative Committee who gave the Governor a brief background of the Forum and laid out the topics the Forum was interested in the Governor addressing.

Mr. Wolfe's introduction concluded with - thus the set of questions we would like you to comment upon are the following. How do the "designated smart growth areas" correspond to the State Plan and Planning Areas 1 and 2? If they are different, why? Or if they are not yet identified, how will they be determined, by whom, and by what criterion? What does Smart Growth mean to the municipalities within Planning Area 2 and how is the State supporting Smart Growth in Planning Area 2?

The Governor said the second question was easier to answer than the first, and one of the reasons he had accepted the invitation was that the Forum was largely doing it right. He said he would like to issue a challenge to the group as he moved towards the state of the state; and try to provide for more vigorous enforcement of the State Plan; and a closer coordination of smart growth principles particularly as it governs regional growth and as it impacts municipal decisions. He said the administration is strongly and irrevocably committed to smart growth by virtue of Executive Order No. 4 and more recently in the aftermath of the Smart Growth Summit. There are three basic principles 1) stop subsidizing sprawl; 2) focus on redevelopment and 3) regulate smarter growth, encouraging growth where we want it and discouraging it where don't want it.

In terms of tackling sprawl he said the NJDOT is taking a "Fix it First" position. In the past ten years New Jersey has spent an average of twenty percent of its annual budget in the

NJDOT on new roads; this year that number has been driven down to four percent. Stringent smart growth criteria are being applied to the capital budget, in addition encouragement of transit villages, compact mixed use development as a residential component is being encouraged. He said it is being done successfully in Morristown, Pleasantville, Rutherford, South Amboy and South Orange where pilot transit villages are being set up and it requires a comprehensive coordination of state agency services based on the delivery of public transit services. Sound parking is encouraged and a good faith effort has been made in Mercer County to design parking structures in appropriate locations that not only encourage urban development but also contribute to pedestrian friendly urban redevelopment down-towns.

Governor McGreevey said part and parcel of stopping sprawl is taking a more rational approach to capital planning. New Jersey spends upwards of three billion dollars on capital projects on an annual basis. He said there is a need to encourage the state capital budgeting and planning commission to work in adherence to the State Plan. The state treasurer, John McCormick has been requested to develop a new mechanism for the annual review of expenditure in planning and the State Planning Commission to ensure that it is in conformity with smart growth principles.

The Governor said there is a need also to reform highway access policy. There is no weaker link in the regulatory armor than current statutory policy on highway access. There is a working group with Commissioner Lettiere and Commissioner James Fox to focus on reconfiguring highway policy.

On Farm preservation, he said work is being done to provide greater open space not only on New Jersey's perimeter but also in downtowns. They are working cooperatively to save not only suburban farms but to promote farm preservation within traditionally considered urban areas.

The Governor went on to share what he thought critically important for the state's future. A major focus on smart growth will be made within the state of the state message, part of this is Forums such as this one are being helpful, not only providing for planning of infrastructure but of major concern the ability to focus on the charge and objectives to which Bob Wolfe stated in his introduction. Fundamentally the current system of municipal planning can never fully accommodate the smart growth principles by virtue of its design.

The Governor said the reason he was attending the meeting was not to answer the Forum's questions but hopefully the Forum can provide substantial input into his question. He said what they would like to do is change the paradigm between planning and zoning on the municipal level and have adherence with smart growth principles in accordance with the State Plan. He said he had distinguished between Board of Adjustment and Municipal Planning entities. What he would like to see come from the Forum is its ideas and recommendations on how New Jersey can provide for more thoughtful impact on regional planning and to potentially suggest a model which may work for the state. He said at the National Governors Association they have looked at models across the nation. The

problem being grappled with is, here is an administration that is adhering to smart growth principles and state agencies and departments that are now adhering to it; how do we move to the next level and require that municipalities do the same. He said he would respectfully submit that it cannot be done given the present structure and he also has the question but not the answer. He asked the Forum to make a formal recommendation either as to a planning methodology and or a system by which a series of recommendations could be achieved or a process by which a uniquely New Jersey model could be developed to grapple with some of these questions. Identify the successes of the Forum and promulgate a plan that may work for the entire state. A plan that does not depend entirely on infrastructure but specifically focus on the question of how to integrate the planning processes in conjunction with the State Plan. This is the most significant question on the table. He said it has been mentioned to him by the virtue of the success of the Forum that it may have some thoughts and answers to his question. He said not just merely to underestimate the importance of transportation infrastructure planning or workable modalities of encouraging public transit but specifically the planning function per se and what should develop as a mechanism statewide that would make it work.

Mayor Cantu said that in terms of regional planning the Legislative Committee had been looking at the proposed *County Municipal Planning Act*. It might be expanded to address what is being discussed.

The Governor said that is an excellent idea. He said there are some in the environmental community who are opposed to that design. He understood the importance of balance and would like as much vigorous thought as possible in that design because the goal is to move smart growth planning to the next level with as much consensus as achievable.

Mayor Cantu said it is important to get some sense of what are the underpinnings of smart growth. Many of the communities in the region and many others statewide have relied upon the State Plan and have made a conscious commitment to adhering to the guidelines of that Plan and are now concerned about the planning basis of smart growth

The Governor said it will be largely the State Plan; obviously there are areas where distinctions have been made. Along with Commissioner Fox, Commissioner Campbell and Commissioner Levin in terms of the Smart Growth Council there is work being done to reconcile those discrepancies. He said there are those who say he should just unilaterally impose by fiat the State Plan as the principal planning document but he think it is important that legitimate differences be reconciled and the Smart Growth Council is doing that.

Mayor Cantu said that there is tremendous support and he recognizes that there needs to be some changes to the way planning takes place at the municipal level. The communities are frozen in the principles of Home Rule. He said that the Forum has been committed and has recognized for success there has to be change.

Governor McGreevey said he appreciated hearing that because he wants to move on smart growth. He said he believes the next step cannot be taken unless there is an

understanding of this fundamental planning question. The process by which we come to an answer is important but there is the political will to do it now. He said he did not know how many bites of this apple in the next quarter century we will get, so it is important that we be right rather than fast; and he welcomed the Forum's thinking on a recommendation as to a process that can achieve an answer within a definitive timeframe.

Mr. Coscia informed the group that at a recent National Governor's Association Forum in Salt Lake City, the states that were successful with Smart Growth initiatives had strong state enabling legislation. For states like New Jersey that is a strong Home Rule state, it was almost impossible to pass that type of legislation. However, also pointed out and agreed on was that it has to be a bottom-up process. The way to achieve this within the framework of the State Plan is through outreach, education and incentives for municipalities. A number of municipalities will join with that kind of approach at the state level.

Governor McGreevey said he understood what was being said, strong leadership on this issue is needed now. He said he had spent a considerable amount of time with NJDEP Commissioner Campbell looking at projected trends in the state particularly over the next twenty-five years and the status quo is not working.

Mayor Reed told the Governor the Forum was established over transportation issues and in no time it has recognized that land use is critical. The reverse is also true where transportation is critical to land use changes that people will be making. Many of the municipalities in the Central Jersey region are victims of master plans and application approvals that assumed transportation initiatives on the planning books that never happened. As a result development was invited and development continued that never worked on existing transportation infrastructure. He said the NJDOT has to be given the authority to bargain with municipalities. They cannot proceed with an application unless there is a mutual commitment for infrastructure that the state is going to pay for and the change in zoning that the municipalities are going to make.

Governor McGreevey said that mechanism would have to be institutionalized; it happens now in an ad hoc, anecdotal basis.

Mayor Reed replied often it works where the municipalities have the advantage and the transportation entity does not have the teeth to say no. There are times where it is going to lead to a bad investment for the state.

In reply Governor McGreevey said he agreed. Executive Order No. 4 was signed to abide by smart growth principles. It has to be linked within the planning mechanism and that relationship has to be institutionalized and that have not been done.

Mayor Hsueh told the Governor that they had institutionalized that relationship in West Windsor. It is important that the legislature and senate branches come together and push for it.

Alison Miller, West Windsor Township Council said there is a third leg to the problem, the linkages between infrastructure and land use has been discussed but if we really want to change land use planning a change in the property tax structure is needed. Property taxes pushes municipalities toward land use planning which neighboring municipalities may not consider smart growth.

In reply the Governor said without a constitutional convention that will not happen. The problem is if all our planning eggs are placed in the context of the overall property tax debate nothing will happen.

Ms. Miller countered there are some solutions like regional tax sharing without going into a complete overall of the property tax structure that should be considered in detail.

The Governor agreeing with Ms. Miller on the incentive based solution but reiterated that a complete restructuring of the property tax structure was not going to happen.

Mayor Hsueh pointed out that another important issue was affordable housing.

Governor McGreevey thought it was important but wanted to focus on the planning question. He said the question is important and need to keep it discreet and focused so that we will have the ability to achieve the most possible good within a relatively short period of time.

Ms. Mount said that the Governor's faith in the Forum was justified. The group could establish a framework to set up a regional zoning plan that could work for the corridor and the municipalities could ultimately adopt.

Pete Rayner, Greater Mercer TMA Board told the Governor that the municipalities needed tools to assist in zoning; and one of the most obvious was enabling legislation for transfer of development rights (TDR).

The Governor replied saying that he publicly endorses transfer of development rights.

Jon Edwards, Mayor, Hopewell Township said to expand on the notion of TDR, there is also a need for inter-municipal transfer of development rights. He said although this is a progressive endeavor, there is one flaw and that is that Trenton should be at the table. They are an important part of the solution. This is a city with substantial water, sewer and traffic infrastructure. Development opportunities can be included easily in many ways that can be productive. There should be a push for redevelopment as opposed to development in the suburbs to intensify sprawl. Hopewell Township is working with the Hopewell Valley Traffic Management Coalition, a government/corporate partnership. The coalition survey traffic and survey employee trips with the hope of assembling a mathematical model that leads to a smart plan for managing growth. This done through coordinated use of flex time, mass

transit and other cooperative tools; alleviating congestion without high state investment transforming roads into multiple lane highways.

The Governor expressed concerns over the reauthorization on TEA 21 and what the federal administration would do. He said the basic financing are worrisome and the prioritization within the financing structure and how New Jersey will be impacted especially for existing infrastructure. There are the consideration of foreign policy and defense concerns and where that will be.

Jon Carnegie, Voorhees Transportation Policy Institute, Rutgers said they served as professional staff for a bi-partisan legislative commission during 1999-2000, looking at how relationships between different levels of government and transportation planning had links and did not have links here in New Jersey. One of the conclusions was that transportation was a new kind of feature characteristic that facilitated municipalities getting together. Two good examples were this Forum and the US 1 Burlington County Corridor Planning. The commission made a series of recommendations which focused around corridor planning partnership where towns, county, state and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) sign on to participate in the planning process.

The Governor told Jon that one had to be careful when looking at making a systemic change. The corridor approach is not necessarily available statewide. You have to adopt a model that can readily be implemented. He said one has to perpetuate what works but have to deal with the tough situations too not just the ideal ones.

Mr. Carnegie said the concepts in general can be transferable to any geography. Municipalities coming together, agreeing to recommendations. The states investment in transportation is linked to the zoning and land use changes necessary to sustain that investment.

The Governor said this forum is almost cherry-picked, it largely consists of mayors and investors who understand the importance of a progressive vision. There is a need to look at other areas where there is not the awareness or the willingness but can achieve critical mass by looking at some type of institutional structure that people will buy into.

Mayor Reed said Burlington has the county base, the county base does not work here, there are three counties. The very existence of the Forum was based upon not only how to cross county lines but also MPO boundaries.

Mayor Cantu told the gathering that he did not think it is insurmountable.

The Governor said on the planning question there needs to be a linkage. How we achieve that linkage and is that linkage on transportation infrastructure through a Forum or how that linkage is achieved, maybe it needs to be entrepreneurial so it is not a cookie cutter approach. He said he needs to tackle the planning question and looks for direction and advise. A simple model needs to be developed that is workable.

Mr. Coscia told the Governor the forum is up to his challenge and will get something to him and his staff.

In closing the Governor said this is perhaps the most successful Forum of its kind in the state. He thanked Mr. Coscia and the commission for its support but also the Forum members for understanding, he just wanted to make sure the rest of New Jersey gets it.

Mr. Wolfe thanked the Governor for his challenge and told him that we agree that the land use system is not working.

### **Legislative Committee Update**

Mayor Cantu, member of Legislative Committee gave an update describing the committee's efforts with transfer of development rights. He told the gathering that he had met with Farm Bureau representative and the Secretary of Agriculture who blessed the process and gave encouragement to move forward. At this point they are beginning to draft a legislative framework for legislation that meets the Forum desires but could be coalesced around the Farm Bureau and the New Jersey League of Municipalities that are two important constituents. The framework is expected in a couple of weeks and then the committee will see how it can be advanced into actual legislation. The legislation that emerges may not be the Forum's because there are other initiatives going on concurrently. The committee will be looking to the administration and key legislators to see if elements of the framework can be incorporated if the legislation moves forward. There will be something happening based upon the Governor's push and the timing is right. It is important the Forum has input and that input is being developed.

Ms. Brake, member of Legislative Committee informed the gathering of a Property Tax Reform Forum that was held in November at the Bloustein School at Rutgers. Members of the panel had experience in all level of the property tax reform problem. There was support for a constitutional convention and regional tax sharing. They are working on how initiatives can be put in a format to get legislators to respond to it in the April 2003 symposium. Ms. Brake said we should be hearing more about constitutional convention between now and then, but this should be a critical time to get together legislation and move ahead to some agreement by August 2003 to get it on the ballot. The forum was co-sponsored by Rutgers and Princeton Universities and the Regional Planning Partnership and there will be a follow-up forum in April 2003 at Princeton.

Ms. Hersh, member of Legislative Committee told the forum she would be sending out the notes on the last symposium in November and copies could be made available to the group. She invited everyone to come to the April session. She said she expected an large number of legislators to attend.

Mr. Wolfe informed the group that the committee has had an on-going discussion on enhanced regional planning. It was the Governor's new initiatives and Executive Order No. 38 that had led to the invitation today and the challenge that we welcome.

Ms. Brake adding to what Bob Wolfe said noted, there is still the unanswered question on how designated growth areas maybe different from the State Plan.

Mr. Coscia responded that he got the distinct impression from the Governor that he was re-enforcing the existing State Development and Redevelopment Plan and that would determine the designated growth areas.

Ms. Brake said the Regional Planning Partnership's new initiatives on the three systems planning may be the basis for an answer to a model on how you may simplify the complexities of planning and incorporate thinking regionally and acting locally.

### **Penns Neck Area EIS Update**

Jon Carnegie gave a brief summary on the status of the EIS process and its traffic studies/modeling results. They are looking at eighteen alternatives and sub-alternatives intended to address traffic congestion, mobility constraints, and safety concerns in the Penns Neck area. The EIS modeling effort confirmed the region's future growth will severely tax the region's transportation infrastructure. The more detailed analysis shows that it will be an increment worse than what was shown by the modeling done for the Forum; that modeling was more regional in scale. The traffic analysis showed the EIS alternatives under consideration, with the exception of those that are modest in scale including some transportation system management options and the No Build, will all provide in the local area significant benefit in terms of congestion relief. The vehicle hours traveled (VHT) savings will range from 21 to 45 percent; VHT under congested conditions will range from 23 to 50 percent in savings; and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) under congested conditions will have a savings of 11 to 24 percent. All indicated, from a transportation perspective, the improvements contemplated in the EIS are needed and worthwhile. In addition, AM peak travel times on northbound US 1 will have 4 to 26 percent savings and PM southbound have savings of 15 to 43 percent. East-west travel in the Penns Neck area reductions ranged from 3 to 31 percent. Overall the analysis confirmed a successful Penns Neck Area improvement should include eliminating traffic signals on US Route 1 in the Penns Neck Area to provide unrestricted traffic flow on US Route 1. It also confirmed that the maintenance of at least one grade separated interchange north of Alexander Road to facilitate east-west traffic flow is needed. More detailed traffic findings are available on the project's website. Over the next several months the potential environmental impacts will be explored. The draft EIS will be ready in April 2003.

### **DRJTBC Southerly Crossings Corridor Study**

Frank McCartney, Executive Director, Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission (DRJTBC) started the presentation by giving an update on E-ZPass. E-ZPass opened on Saturday night on 7 toll bridges across the Delaware River. As expected, there was some predictable driver confusion, but each day shows improvements in queue reductions. The E-ZPass lane on Trenton-Morrisville Bridge was particularly successful. Improvements will help congestion relief. In Phase II all lanes will have E-ZPass capability although not all lanes will be dedicated to E-ZPass; all automatic toll machines will be eliminated and drivers will either pay electronically or speak to an attendant.

Along with E-ZPass, last year the commission approved a toll increase to support a \$526 million capital improvement program spanning 4 areas.

- 1) \$150 million system preservation for existing infrastructure. All bridges are in line for major capital rehabilitation. This includes 7 toll bridges and 13 toll supported bridges.
- 2) \$30 million is for system management including E-ZPass and I-95 Corridor Coalition.
- 3) In light of September 11<sup>th</sup> system security protection has become a priority. It was realized that DRJTBC infrastructure had the same vulnerability as other public works and are targets of opportunity. An international security consultant conducted a system vulnerability assessment, recommending the creation of a small public safety department, which would oversee the system through close circuit television at a command and control center.
- 4) 10-year piece of the overall 25-year capital plan is the \$323 million system enhancement strategy. A substantial piece of these funds are to be invested in major transportation improvements to the District 1 area, including the Scudders Falls and US Route 1 bridges.

George Alexandridis, Engineer, Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission presented the results of the Southerly Crossing Study. He started the presentation by highlighting the conclusions of the study. Traffic volumes will continue to grow, congestion will worsen and additional lane capacity will be needed in the corridor by the planning horizon of Year 2025. The study looked at alternatives that included multi-modal and transit components. The study indicated that transit improvements modeled could help reduce auto trips and congestion across the bridges to a degree. However, transit improvements cannot supplant the need for additional lane capacity in the corridor. The Commission will however endorse and support transit initiatives. Improvements came down to two scenarios - inclusion of Falls Hamilton Bridge at the fork in the corridor and without the bridge construction. The second scenario looked at doing some widening along the Route 1 corridor in the northbound direction. The Commission found that this scenario, could get acceptable traffic flow capacity if there is capacity improvements to Scudders Falls, Route 1 and Calhoun Street Bridge. It was found that construction of the Falls Hamilton Bridge would have proved 6 to 10 times more expensive than improvements to US Route 1. It was also found that the needs at each bridge location were independent of other bridges. Therefore, improvements at each bridge did not affect the need (or lack thereof) to

proceed with improvements to other bridges. Projects could therefore be developed separately.

Major study findings included adding 2 lanes at I-95, Scudder Falls toll supported bridge; providing an additional 2 lanes in peak direction at Calhoun Street Bridge and provide an additional lane in northbound direction at the US Route 1 (Trenton-Morrisville Toll Bridge).

Next steps are to take these study findings and develop 3 separate initiatives - looking at preparation of preliminary engineering and environmental documentation for the additional 2 lanes on I-95/Scudder Falls Bridge; rehabilitation of 50 year old bridge on Route 1 and additional 1 lane; one way coupling of Calhoun Street Bridge and Lower Trenton Corridor or 2 reversible lanes at Calhoun Street Bridge to provide peak hour capacity that is called for at that location.

DRJTBC is currently in the process of finalizing a tri-party memorandum of understanding with PennDot and NJDOT for the I-95/Scudders Falls initiative. The Commission has agreed to fund the preliminary engineering studies and environmental documentation phases following PennDOT's 10-step project development process. DRJTBC will select a consultant to do the work, which will be reviewed by both PennDOT and NJDOT. All parties are scheduled to sign agreement in principal in December.

Timeline for this initiative includes a scoping field view checklist; meeting scheduled for December 11, 2002 with DVRPC, NJDOT, Federal Highway Administration representatives and NJDOT to conduct field views to identify what the issues are on I-95 corridor. Based on field view results, the commission will prepare more detailed RFP/Scope of Services for the preliminary engineering, and environmental documentation. Before being issued, it will be reviewed by both PennDOT and NJDOT. Consultant proposals solicited in January and a choice will be made in February 2003. RFP/Scope of Services for the bridge rehabilitation and additional lane on US Route 1 should be complete in January. Consultant proposals should be solicited in February and a final choice selection made in March. On the Calhoun St initiative an RFP/Scope of Services will be prepared to look at one-way coupling and reversible lanes. Consultant proposals should be solicited in February and a final choice selection made in March.

The study area for the Southerly Crossing Study started at Duck Island and ended at Washington Crossings, a distance of approximately 9 miles. The study looked at four bridges in that corridor, starting with Route 1, Calhoun Street, Lower Trenton and Scudders Falls. The proposed Falls Hamilton Bridge was also looked at as it fell within the study area. DVRPC was thanked as Commission used their model, which was modified. DVRPC also helped in forecasting 2025 traffic flows.

Mr. Coscia asked the speaker if toll revenues would pay for the order of magnitude for the outlined plan, budgeted at \$162 million to \$178 million, or would federal funds be sought.

Mr. McCartney responded that the Commission was committed to funding all improvements in-house. The funds to accomplish this were in place.

In response to a question about the lack of consistency in E-ZPass lanes placements and dimensions between different toll bridges and lack of E-ZPass dedicated lanes, Mr. McCartney responded that the geometries of individual toll bridges are distinct. Goals are already in place to provide both dedicated E-ZPass lanes and give all other lanes E-ZPass capabilities (to be opened up to E-ZPass users based on peak hour congestion needs), as with the Atlantic City Expressway. To encourage electronic toll usage, the DRJTBC is set to offer E-ZPass commuters who use tolls 20 times or more in a 35-day period a 40% discount on the retail rate. Casual E-ZPass users (less than 20 times within the same period) will receive a 20% discount.

Jack Kanarek, NJ Transit said that with the Central Jersey Forums interest in BRT, was the DRJTBC providing for bus priority techniques in their toll bridge improvements.

Frank McCartney responded that it was being considered.

Tom Marchwinski, NJ Transit added that consideration of bus priority techniques should be considered. In addition, he said the provision of park and ride capacity on the Pennsylvania side, which would make accessibility to bus improvements more convenient, should be an acceptable item for study as part of the bridge improvements studies.

Mr. McCartney added that during the needs analysis of the multi modal aspects of the study, mass transit was included as part of the overall congestion solution. Although only contributing a 5% decrease, the DRJTBC was committed to mass transit improvements, which would include additional park and ride facilities if needed. This would be in the Scope of Services being currently worked on.

Mr. Alexandridis said that opportunity for bus priority treatments (based on models) showed that at New Town interchange bus service would be particularly beneficial.

Ms. Mount asked if pedestrian and bike lane additions would be part of the bridge improvements.

Mr. McCartney said I-95 bridge improvements would most likely warrant a new structure along side the existing bridge. This would be built to current specifications that would most likely include bike and pedestrian facilities.

Ms. Mount asked that Hopewell- Lawrence Township be included in planning discussions before they are confronted with a fully developed project at their doorstep.

Mr. McCartney said that public participation was a high priority at the outset. As such, an advisory committee was formed which included DVRPC, NJDOT, NJ Transit, PennDOT, SEPTA, Mercer County, Bucks County, state environmental protection agencies and canal

commissions. They tried to include as many major stakeholders as possible. The counties were counted on to represent the interests of their constituents. A public forum was held at the College of New Jersey, which was lightly attended despite heavy promotion. As the studies moved forward, the Commission, as part of their standard operating practices, would be involved in public participation forums in all communities close to all project sites.

## **Dialogue**

Mr. Keck told the Forum he was pleased to be with Central Jersey Forum. He affirmed the Governor's view that the Forum was a tremendous group. He said the Forum was ahead of the curve in its understanding of the relationship between and importance of land use and transportation. The Governor is at the forefront of the major issue New Jersey would be facing in the future. The increasing demand on infrastructure and the lack of funds to meet these demands and how dollars are spent in the future will be a struggle. He said proposals for the next round of federal funding being discussed in Washington D.C., New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania are not faring well compared to the rest of the country. He once again thanked the Forum's members for their work and dedication to the task at hand.

Mr. Coscia said that DVRPC was working closely with a number of national groups on the reauthorization of TEA 21. The issues focus on the recipient and donor states. Presently all states donate a certain amount of revenue based on federal taxes on gasoline, tires etc. Some states get more money back than they contribute and others do not. New Jersey and Pennsylvania do okay. However, many states in the south and Midwest get a lot less back than they contribute. Now with a congressman from Alaska chairing the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, it looks like states in the south and Midwest get back more money, there is a proposal that all states get back at least 95% of their money. This is up from the current 80-85% many states in the south currently get back. This would mean a reduction in the amount of funds received by New Jersey and Pennsylvania. It is unknown if this amendment will pass.

Ms. Mount announced the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail, a 20-mile bike loop that will go through several corporate campuses including Bristol, Meyers, Squibb. It will circle county parks in a continuous loop to which other trails could be linked. Estimated cost of the trail is \$6 million and so far \$2 million has been raised. The trail only goes through two private properties. Ground breaking on the project will be next year.

Mayor Reed announced a smart growth initiative in Princeton Borough focusing on a downtown redevelopment program built around new residential apartments in the center of town as well as a new 500-car garage to provide parking for downtown visitors. This project is being done in conjunction with the local library. The proposal will probably be decided in the next 2 weeks. It is extremely controversial.

Mayor Marchand added that although no plans have been officially made, the local paper got hold of a story about development of Princeton Shopping Center. Reactions have so far been negative.

Mayor Hseuh invited Forum members to participate in two public outreach meetings to be held the following week regarding a 645-acre development proposal. At the meeting stations will be set up to show different aspects of the project with the project team present to explain the project and answer any questions. The developers have been proactive following smart growth principals in the design. The timeframe for the project is over 10 years.

Louise Wilson, Mayor, Montgomery Township told the group that the township has been engaged in intensive traffic circulation and transportation planning all year. They have recently adopted two amendments to the traffic circulation element of the township's master plan, which involves separating through traffic from local traffic. They have been engaged in lively and productive community-based planning efforts focused on the intersection of US Route 206 and CR 518 and the areas around it. Six thousand community surveys were also sent out and results currently being tabulated by a consultant. Based on the results of these efforts, some rezoning and implementation of some design guideline will be developed. Also, there is an opportunity to develop compact, mixed used center around a dormant train stop near where US Route 206 and CR 601 converge (in the only other designated growth zone in the township).

Ms. Hersh said Princeton University is working towards expanding shuttle bus service, hopefully to evolve into a community shuttle network serving Princeton. She believes it is crucial that DINKY service be improved. A DINKY stop on West Windsor land between Lake Carnegie and US Route 1 would be ideal so that parking could be constructed to serve Princeton and near by proposed graduate housing. Princeton University is willing to put money into a study which include that of a new station. They would like to do something very soon as there is a major need.

Mayor Reed commented that BRT as proposed is designed for people in Princeton to go elsewhere but not for people outside of the study area to come into Princeton's center. He said that a balance has to be sought, allowing local residents to locate new sources for shopping and recreation, the same actions had to be taken to offer residents outside of the Princeton the same opportunity. Care had to be taken not to kill local business.

Mr. Coscia said that the Governor would be holding the first annual New Jersey State Transportation Conference on January 7<sup>th</sup> in New Brunswick. Information would be posted on DVRPC's website.

## **Next Steps**

The next Forum meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 21, 2003.

