

## DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

### Highlights of the Central New Jersey Transportation Forum Meeting of May 16, 2003

#### Attendees (77):

Name	Organization
S. Abbey	Princeton Junction Communities
Rosemarie Anderson	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Nicholas Angarone	Mercer County Planning
Brent Barnes	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Brian Bauerle	New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
Peter Bilton	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Dianne Brake	Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
Sandra Brillhart	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Ivy Brown	New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
David Campbell	Princeton Packet
Janet Campbell-Lorenc	SYSTRA
Peter A. Cantu	Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc., Plainsboro Township
Ron Carle	Dewberry-Goodkind, Inc.
Jon Carnegie	Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute
Paul Cohn	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Susan Conlon	Princeton Junction Communities
John Coscia	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Stephen Decter	West Windsor Township
Marge Della Vecchia	New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
Elizabeth Donahue	Lawrence Township
Cay Dufau	Middlesex County Transportation Coordinating Council
Jon Edwards	Hopewell Township
Emi Faloughi	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Leslie Floyd	Mercer County Planning
Katherine Fullerton	Washington Township Planning
Hamid Ghadimy	New Jersey Turnpike
Basil Giletto	Mercer County Chamber of Commerce
George Hawkins	Stony Brook – Millstone Watershed Association
Matthew Hersh	Princeton University
Pam Hersh	Princeton University
Jim Hess	Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
Shing Fu Hsueh	West Windsor Township
Nancy Jusko	Ridewise of Raritan
Jack Kanarek	New Jersey Transit
Dennis Keck	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Greta Kiernan	

Katherine Kish	Princeton Regional Chamber of Commerce
Joe Kowalski	Hopewell Township
Michael LaPlace	Plainsboro Township
Charles Latini, Jr	Ewing Township
Donna Lewis	Mercer County
Philip Ludeke	Princeton Forrestal Center
John Manzoni	Michael Baker Jr., Incorporated
Silvio Marcacci	NJ Governor's Office
Phyllis Marchand	Princeton Township
Craig Marshall	South Brunswick Township Planning Board
Hamou Meghdir	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)
Alison Miller	West Windsor Township
Jack Molenaar	Plainsboro Township
Pam Mount	Lawrence Township
Diane Murphy-Atkins	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Dan O'Connell	United Transportation Union
David Parris	Penns Neck
Pete Rayner	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Marvin Reed	Princeton Borough
Ron Reinhardt	Transit Center
James Requa	New Jersey Office of Smart Growth
Sarah Roberts	Montgomery Township
Howard Rosen	CANAC, Inc
Roger Sager	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Walter Schmidlin	Sarnoff Corporation
James Schwarzwald	New Jersey Transit
Charles Scott	New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Don Shanis	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Sandra Shapiro	West Windsor Citizen for Transportation Alternative
Jennifer Siegel	Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Candy Snyder	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Lee Solow	Princeton Regional Planning Board
Chris Tarr, Esq.	Smith, Stratton
Ron Tindall	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)
Paul Truban	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Evren Ulker-Kacar	Heyer, Gruel & Associates
Geoff Urbanik	South Brunswick Township Planning Board
George Ververides	Middlesex County Planning
Herman Volk	New Jersey Office of Smart Growth
Pete Weale	Penns Neck
Louise Wilson	Montgomery Township

*The meeting of the Central Jersey Transportation Forum took place on Friday, May 16, 2003 at Sarnoff Corporation in Princeton, NJ. Jon Carnegie, Rutgers University gave a presentation on Transportation Enhancement Districts. The Forum decided to withhold correspondence on Route 92 to Governor McGreevey until the Draft Environmental Impact Statement has been released. Commissioner Susan Bass Levin addressed the Forum, on the state's perspective on the BIG Map and the State Plan. Updates were presented on the BRT project and Freight Committee activities. The meeting concluded with Mr. Coscia announcing the next meeting date, Friday September 12, 2003.*

John Coscia, Executive Director of DVRPC, called the meeting to order. Forum participants introduced themselves. Mr. Coscia reminded the gathering that their participation was an integral component of the discussions.

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

Mr. Coscia asked for amendments to the highlights of the February 21, 2003 Forum meeting. The motion was carried to approve the highlights as written.

### **Legislative Committee**

Pete Rayner, the Greater Mercer TMA led the Legislative Committee presentation. There were two updates -- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Regional Planning Protocol; and a presentation on Transportation Enhancement Districts.

Peter Cantu, Mayor, Plainsboro Township gave an update on the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) effort. He told the group that legislation is now being drafted; and the Consensus Points adopted at the last Forum meeting were being incorporated in the draft legislation. When asked if there was a great deal of support for TDR, Mayor Cantu said that a lot of the past reluctance has been overcome especially with the Farm Bureau who is now very active in the process. He said the absence of opposition is equally important.

Diane Brake, Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. gave the Forum an update on the Regional Planning Protocol that was presented at the last Forum meeting and submitted to the state's administration thereafter. She said the Regional Action Plan (RAP) is more comprehensive than others that are being circulated. There has been a series of meetings with different organizations including New Jersey Department of Community Affairs for endorsement of the RAP. Many have agreed in concept but the *devil is in the details* especially with New Jersey's Home Rule. In answer to Mr. Coscia's question of how does the RAP differ from the County Master Plan; she told the Forum the convening agency is not exclusively the county other agencies can take the lead.

Jon Carnegie, Voorhees Transportation Policy Institute, Rutgers University presented Transportation Enhancement Districts (TED) to the Forum. He briefly summarized the

background of TED – included the creation of the Regional Intergovernmental Transportation Coordinating Study Commission (RITCSC). In 1998, the Legislature created RITCSC whose deliberation identified specific measures to simplify and expand the transportation planning and revenue generating tools available to state, county and municipal government. Changes to the Transportation Development District Act (TDD) were recommended – eliminate barriers to TDD implementation, clarify existing language and broaden the scope of the present TDD approach. These included allowing assessment of fees to finance transportation needs. The proposed NJ Transportation Enhancement and Congestion Relief Act (A954/S1483) is now with the Transportation Committee awaiting movement. He spoke of the planning process that includes a cooperative joint planning process (JPP) initiated by the county and requires partnership with private sector, affected municipalities, MPOs, NJDOT and NJ Transit. The types of fees were discussed – transportation development fees which captured new development and future transportation infrastructure needs; and transportation enhancement fees which captured the existing, along with on-going transit operation and district management costs. He said this could prove beneficial to the Forum in their consideration of BRT. Eligible costs, who pays, waivers and credits, and oversight and management of TEDs were presented. Mr. Carnegie presented a hypothetical case study of a TED in a section of the Route 1 corridor. He concluded his presentation by saying that the TED concept could provide a voluntary, permissive and flexible “Smart Growth” tool to plan and finance regional transportation solutions in the Route 1 corridor with maximum input from those affected by the plan.

Mayor Marvin Reed, Princeton Borough commended Mr. Carnegie on the excellent presentation. He went on to say the devil is in the details and that a subcommittee should be formed to look at how it may apply in the study region in real terms. This is very critical especially where public sector funds will be used.

Pam Hersh, Princeton University said a SIM city need to be done for the region. Take the three legislative proposals and do a simulated example of how they would apply. They are three important concepts for which there could be concrete case study.

In reply Mr. Coscia said the three are discrete and separate – one addresses land-use and the other two involve the private sector in a structural way and does not get to the land-use problem.

In response to Mayor Hseuh, West Windsor question about existing transportation improvement districts (TID) and potential boundaries for TED, Mr. Carnegie said the JPP would determine the boundaries and who plan to access. It cannot be made too broad or too wide because unrelated trips start to get included. If it is primarily commercial then it can be based on a particular corridor. TED would supersede existing TIDs. Improvements under the TID would be incorporated in the TED and fees moved to the broader concept.

Mr. Coscia explained the present TDD Act only affect new development and certain densities. TED permits capital funds and operating funds for transit. There is no provision for transit under TDD.

Alison Miller, West Windsor Council stated it is a good idea to exempt affordable housing but there should be some provisions for developments with mixed type housing.

Mr. Coscia said this is a unique opportunity in this region. There is the opportunity for a municipality to opt out after given the opportunity to look at the overall scheme of things.

Mr. Carnegie added that it is an iterative process. To make sure improvements get made should make decisions at JPP.

Mr. Coscia said if the counties did the work and came up with the capital improvements that project would possibly get higher priority on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Mayor Reed said that additional information was needed on how this legislation would impact existing businesses and residential properties. If these entities had to pay more money, this could become a political issue.

Mr. Coscia replied it could be structured that it can be acceptable to the community. It is flexible.

Mr. Carnegie added that the existing and future need could be determined and the fees evaluated based on that.

Donna Lewis, Mercer County Planning told the Forum that TED is an improvement on TDD. Mercer County has the only existing TDD in the state and based upon experience the ratio of private/public funding is usually a 50/50 split or close. Fees can only be used for improvements within the boundaries. Provisions are in the TED legislation to allow money to be spent outside the boundary for transit and BRT is an example. TED management tools equalize the playing field with developers.

Mr. Rayner told the Forum that the Legislative Committee had endorsed the TED concepts and at this point was seeking approval from the full Forum to support the proposed legislation.

Mayor Reed said the BRT committee should continue to look at TED and how it might get developed and applied in the region.

Mr. Coscia suggested taking the resolution as presented by Mr. Rayner then another for Mayor Reed's suggestion.

The motion was carried for the Forum to support the proposed TED bill.

Mr. Coscia asked for a motion for TED to be further evaluated by the BRT committee. After some discussion the motion was carried.

## Highway Projects

Don Shanis, Deputy Director, DVRPC described the *Planned Projects Status Report* distributed at the meeting. The report includes the projects in the study area to keep Forum members abreast of what is going on. The report will be updated periodically and distributed. The report begins by describing NJDOT project development process. The current TIP projects are included from both MPOs and mapped on aerial photographs. Two New Jersey Turnpike projects and a study area map that depicts all the projects are included.

In reference to the draft letter to the Governor in support of Route 92 that was distributed, Mr. Shanis told the gathering the letter would not be sent at this time. Comments were still coming in, some of which were positive and others negative. He said he had gotten a comment from South Brunswick that morning stating the township was still opposed to the highway.

Mayor Cantu said the Forum has spent four years in developing a balanced approach of land-use, transit, highway and TDM strategies to alleviate congestion in the study area. The Forum endorsed the *Action Agenda* that outlines the balanced approach. Route 92 is at a critical juncture, it seems if we should have an impact and be faithful to what we have endorsed we need to act now.

Mr. Coscia said it is a matter of timing. The letter is being deferred until the DEIS comes out.

Mayor Louise Wilson, Montgomery Township said the letter does not have unanimous support of all members of the Forum.

George Hawkins, Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association said the roadway has been steeped in controversy, an entity such as this Forum should not take a stand like this before the DEIS is published. He advised to let the process conclude before taking a stand. He added other controversial roadways included in the letter should be removed.

Mr. Coscia informed the gathering that the letter was drafted in a way to show the Forum recommends a balanced approach in the corridor. This gives a broader perspective to the Governor – it is a comprehensive approach.

In reply to the suggestion by Geoff Urbanik, South Brunswick to wait until the EIS is finalized before it is sent out, Mr. Coscia said after the EIS is finalized it is too late.

Dennis Keck, Assistant Commissioner, NJDOT said the letter is premature. On the other hand the Forum has done a lot of work and to comment on transportation in the region without referring to the EIS is appropriate but to send the letter in its current form, the Forum is clearly missing the boat. The Forum must decide what is the message it wants to convey.

Mayor Reed said the Princetons support Route 92 but not for the reasons stated in the letter. The letter is misleading as to consensus and reason.

Mr. Coscia asked if two letters should be sent. The first would be out of the work the Forum has done and the second, after the DEIS is published and the Forum has examined it and aired our concerns.

Mayor Jon Edwards, Hopewell Township said there will be some disagreement. He said Hopewell believes in the process and they are committed to wait for the DEIS and will study and examine it.

Mr. Hawkins said the letter can be stronger if consensus is reached after the DEIS comes out.

Mayor Phyllis Marchand, Princeton Township stated that the study should continue and the highway looked at regionally. Route 92 should be extended to Route 206. Are we avoiding a real look at the road? If we look at it regionally, traffic is going through your neighborhood anyway. The letter should state that good regional planning dictate that ideally Route 92 should extend to Route 206.

Mr. Urbanik said Route 92 is the project that will destroy the neighborhoods, not existing traffic.

In response to Jennifer Siegel, Tri-state Transportation Campaign comment that her organization opposes the project and clearly there is no consensus at the table, Mr. Coscia said most highway project have major opposition, we have to work through it.

George Ververides, Middlesex County Planning said the letter is not necessary. All have made their position clear, on record. He said the Governor should be sent a copy of the report (*Executive Summary*).

Mayor Wilson said she was very uncomfortable with the group of roadway projects. She said the analysis showed that Route 206 bypass would negatively impact Montgomery.

Mr. Coscia reminded the group of the process used and the recommendations that came out of that process. The Forum did agree to support projects as they moved along their own paths.

Mayor Cantu said highway improvements ranked as the top largest contributor to relieving traffic in the region.

Sarah Roberts, Montgomery Township said there were some controversial positions taken in the letter that could become a major election issue.

To sum up the discussion Mr. Coscia told the Forum a letter would be drafted around the first of July stating that the Central Jersey Transportation Forum endorsed a package of improvements and reaffirms our support for the process and list of program.

## **Freight Committee Update**

Mr. Keck, Chairman, Freight Committee presented the update. The first meeting was held on April 14 with 12 members in attendance. NJDOT staff talked about importance of freight to the region. Seventy five percent of freight; originating or terminating; is moved by trucks in New Jersey. Logistics Council met in November 2002 with representation of all aspects of freight in New Jersey. Three subcommittees will be formed to assist the department with land use, infrastructure/operational, and regulatory/finance issues. Commissioner Lettiere has set up Motor Carrier Highway Safety Taskforce. The committee decided to invite short line rail operators to sit on the committee. There was concern about education tools, need to provide information to stakeholders. Warehousing, distribution centers, brown-fields and how to support Smart Growth initiatives and State Plan were other topics discussed at the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for June 23, 2003 and discussion will include capacity of roadway network and truck impact.

Ms. Brake said the freight problem is multi-state; the challenge to the Forum is to connect it to what the group can do.

Mr. Keck replied that NJDOT is currently gathering information and getting the facts.

Dan O'Connell, United Transportation Union said that when CSX and Norfolk Southern acquired the lines it was with the understanding that there would be reduction of truck traffic. Currently, rail lines have staging areas outside of New Jersey and transport goods by truck through the state.

Mr. Coscia said the federal administration had put through the SafeTEA bill. This is the first time freight has been funded at the federal level. It is important the freight committee recommend projects on the freight side.

## **Guest Speaker**

Commissioner Susan Bass Levin, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs started her address by telling the gathering that the State Plan Map came about through consensus and it is the most important tool for New Jersey. The State Plan Map is a planning document. It has been criticized as being too cumbersome. The State Planning Commission wants to expedite the processes; carry out regional planning smartly and expeditiously. It is important that we plan better; smart growth makes sense. Local planning and zoning are the laws and State Plan Map or BIG Map does not change that. BIG Map is the NJDEP map and that is significant; it helps to give a focus. It is the introduction of a new set of NJDEP regulations, a tiered set. One set focus on growth areas. One size fits all



approach is not encouraged and not conducive to smart growth. The second is middle growth and the third a more stringent review, environmentally sensitive areas fall in this category. This is mapped. It gives certainty and predictability to the NJDEP planning process. The idea behind the new system was to provide some level of certainty. The State Plan Map is a good document but does not have the teeth to go far enough. At the NJDCA, the Office of Smart Growth (OSG) has changed focus to planning. Smart Future has been initiated; it encourages towns and counties to plan together. NJ Transit, NJDOT, NJDEP and other agencies are working with communities to address problems. BIG Map reflects new ways of doing things at NJDEP. Regulations will be drafted over the next few months, debated and changed. Some data included in the BIG Map was incorrect. The map was withdrawn after the comments period that ended in April. The regulatory process needs changing and Commissioner Campbell is working on it. Once NJDEP finishes review the data will be passed on to the State Planning Commission. It will be overlaid on the State Plan map along with the transportation master plan. There will be cross acceptance process, public hearing and ultimately a new State Plan Map. The end result is more certainty and predictability. Need to plan regionally with transportation in mind. Improve mass transit and recognize many different approaches to the problem. The administration wants to hear ideas. Governor McGreevey is committed to smart growth.

Mr. Coscia asked if the NJDEP approach is a top down approach and the State Plan is a bottom up approach, how would they marry.

Commissioner Levin replied that regulation is always top down. The map portion needs to change. The earlier version was concept only. What you will see now is a bottom up approach.

Ms. Brake said the NJDEP mapped data shows where environmental constraints are. The State Plan Map is an illustration of a plan. It incorporated facts, politics and good planning for the future.

In responding to Mr. Hawkins question if it is recorded how the process is being created, the Commissioner replied not yet.

Mr. Ververides asked if the counties and municipalities would get a chance to see the data the State Planning Commission use to make sure it is in sync with county data.

Commissioner Levin said the data maybe coming from the counties.

Mr. Coscia said decisions are currently being made concerning grants and permits, will the NJDEP Map stop those projects.

Commissioner Levin responded by saying the operative document is the State Plan Map; the NJDEP Map is only conceptual. It is not legal to say, "you are in the red zone we not going to approve you."

## **Bus Rapid Transit**

Sandra Brillhart, Executive Director, Greater Mercer TMA presented the findings of their BRT study. She said the study was done with the SYSTRA/Baker consulting team. The main conclusions of the study was that BRT is feasible in the Route 1 Corridor but the window of opportunity would not be open forever; need to start planning now. There were two service plan options – Regional Plan includes park and rides and Downtown Core Plan includes high levels of priority treatment. BRT alignment possibilities and guide-way options with costs were presented. The stations studied included five stations served by park and rides, two stations for Gateways and thirteen internal core stations. The presentation included maps depicting two Northern Gateway options and three Southern Gateway options. Ms. Brillhart said next action steps should be – keep the project visible; identify funding and develop BRT policies.

Mr. Shanis briefed the Forum on the progress of the BRT Alternative Analysis. The project is estimated to cost \$916,000 and is being financed through four agencies – NJDOT, NJ Transit, NJTPA and DVRPC. NJDOT and NJ Transit already have their portion but DVRPC and NJTPA will have to take it to their boards in June and July respectively for approval. A Request for Proposal (RFP) will be published as soon as possible, preferably no later than July. New Jersey Transit will lead the project with an expected duration of 12 months. He said there are two priority areas -- assisting the municipalities in preserving the right-of-way (ROW) and the status of the DINKY. We will need to follow the federal requirements if we are going to approach them for New Starts funding.

Mr. Keck said there is an opportunity for success if we act quickly and work together.

James Schwarzwald, Manager of Area Studies, NJ Transit said the process does not include an EIS; this would be needed before going into Preliminary Engineering.

Mayor Reed said the BRT subcommittee should meet again because there were significant questions left unanswered at the last committee meeting.

Mr. Shanis replied there would be an extensive outreach process.

Mayor Reed said there was a need for further workshop on BRT before starting public outreach.

Stephen Decter, West Windsor Planning Board said the township would be re-zoning the Wyeth tract in October and there are traffic related problems. Application will be coming soon and West Windsor will need guidance in that process as it relates to BRT.

Ms. Brake commended the agencies for taking the initiative in moving the project toward reality.

## Next Steps

The meeting concluded with the announcement that Friday September 12, 2003 is the date for the next Forum meeting.

