

DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Highlights of the Central New Jersey Transportation Forum Meeting of September 12, 2003

Attendees (67):

Name	Organization
Bruce Ahern	Michael Baker Jr., Inc.
Rosemarie Anderson	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
John Araneo	French & Parrello Associates
Wendy Benchley	Princeton Borough Council
Joe Bertoni	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Bryan Bidlach	South Brunswick Township
Peter Bilton	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Dianne Brake	Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
Sandra Brillhart	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Peter A. Cantu	Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc., Plainsboro Township
Ron Carle	Dewberry-Goodkind, Inc.
Tom Clark	New Jersey Transit
Susan Conlon	Princeton Junction Communities
John Coscia	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Talvin Davis	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Stephen Decter	West Windsor Township
Elizabeth Donahue	Lawrence Township
Kelly Durkin	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Emi Faloughi	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Katherine Fullerton	Washington Township Planning
Victor Furmanec	Dresdner Robin
Tony Gambilonghi	Middlesex County Planning Board
Hamid Ghadimy	New Jersey Turnpike
Basil Giletto	Mercer County Chamber of Commerce
Pam Hersh	Princeton University
Jim Hess	Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
Congressman Rush Holt	United States Congress – 12 th District New Jersey
Shing Fu Hsueh	West Windsor Township
Martin Hull	Michael Baker Jr., Incorporated
Ileana Ivanciu	Dewberry-Goodkind, Inc.
Nancy Jusko	Ridewise of Raritan
Jack Kanarek	New Jersey Transit
Greta Kiernan	Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein Office
Miki Krakauer	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Michael LaPlace	Plainsboro Township
Bradford Lyon	Hopewell Borough

Alan Maiman	New Jersey Transit
Phyllis Marchand	Princeton Township
Maura McManimon	New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
Alison Miller	West Windsor Township
Pam Mount	Lawrence Township
David Parris	Penns Neck
Jim Pivovar	Gannett-Fleming
Pete Rayner	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Marvin Reed	Princeton Borough
Ron Reinhardt	Transit Center
Roger Sager	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Walter Schmidlin	Sarnoff Corporation
James Schwarzwalder	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
Charles Stark	HNTB
Anne Strauss-Wieder	A. Strauss-Weider, Inc.
Chris Tarr, Esq.	Smith, Stratton
Ron Tindall	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)
Paul Truban	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Danielle Tucker	Mercer County Planning Board
Evren Ulker-Kacar	Heyer, Gruel & Associates
Geoff Urbanik	South Brunswick Township Planning Board
Kenneth Wedeen	Somerset County Planning Board
Louise Wilson	Montgomery Township
Bob Wolfe	Princeton Forrestal Center
Jim Yeager	Michael Baker Jr., Inc.

The meeting of the Central Jersey Transportation Forum took place on Friday, September 12, 2003 at Sarnoff Corporation in Princeton, NJ. Congressman Rush Holt briefly addressed the gathering. Anne Strauss-Weider gave a presentation on Freight in New Jersey and Pam Mount presented the Lawrence-Hopewell Bike Trail project. Alan Maiman spoke of New Jersey Transit's efforts to ease connectivity between buses, NE Corridor rail lines and the South Jersey Light Rail. Updates were presented on the BRT project and Freight and Legislative Committee activities. The meeting concluded with Mr. Coscia announcing the next meeting will be early January 2004.

John Coscia, Executive Director of DVRPC, called the meeting to order. He introduced Congressman Rush Holt to Forum participants and called upon him to say a few words.

The Congressman was brief; he said he appreciated the work DVRPC has been doing in the region. He said there is no public policy area more dependent on cooperation than transportation. He told the gathering the Transportation Re-Authorization bill before congress was viewed by many as a “money bag” but it will frame transportation for the future. He said he is preparing his input for the re-authorization and is reaching out at all levels – state, regional and local.

Summary of the May Meeting’s Highlights

Mr. Coscia asked for amendments to the highlights of the May 16, 2003 Forum meeting. The motion was carried to approve the highlights as written.

Freight

Anne Strauss-Weider, A. Strauss-Weider, Inc. gave a presentation on freight in New Jersey. Her presentation consisted of why is freight important; what are the key issues and what can be done. Freight is a major employer in the state employing almost half a million. There is a huge competitive advantage in New Jersey in assembly. There are two major assembly areas in United States – New Jersey and Southern California. She said New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the country and freight is going to grow, therefore there will be greater opportunities for conflict. The challenge is how can we maximize the benefits and minimize the impact to our communities. She examined four categories looking at solutions:

Traffic Flow – replace at grade crossings; motivate mode shifts, develop truck access; reduce empty truck moves and build truck rest area.

Land use and economic development – encourage industrial sanctuaries/brownfield initiatives (zoning ordinances to keep uses where they are); create buffer zones (noise and spillage); integrate transportation and economic development programs for urban and suburban area; through ordinances or agreement sculpt hours of operation and develop local job training and hiring programs.

Safety and security – undertake public education; create truck-based Highway Watch Program; create walls for pedestrian paths and develop incident reporting programs (incident management program).

Environmental – for noise - berm and sound walls, limit hours of operation, create railroad quiet zones; for environmental – new technologies for trucks and locomotives (alternative fuel), green port initiatives (electric cranes instead of diesel). The presentation concluded with Ms. Strauss-Weider discussing moving forward. She said communication, collaboration and continuity are key. The opportunities and issues need to be identified. A collaborative effort is needed in order to craft solutions and continued monitoring is essential.

Mr. Coscia told the gathering in the new transportation proposal more funding is being allocated to freight. Shifting modes is important Class 1 railroads needs access to federal dollars.

Marvin Reed, Mayor Princeton Borough said the truck problem is underscored. NJDOT origin-destination study determined that the problem was with the tolls on the turnpike. More than 25% of the traffic was not north-south but east-west going to the truck terminals and warehouses in the Allentown area in Pennsylvania. Not just avoiding the turnpike but traveling across the central portions of New Jersey through established neighborhoods. Rail has been ignored by the state and has helped towns to build large truck terminals. Central New Jersey has to come to grips with the freight issue.

Peter Cantu, Mayor of Plainsboro Township seconded Mayor Reed's comments and added that there has been a lack of understanding with warehousing; it was thought that traffic generated by them would all go to the turnpike but it is not it is going through local communities. Municipalities should be allowed to control garbage trucks.

Dianne Brake, Director of Regional Planning Partnership said this is a cry to undertake another study to understand the flow of trucks and demands of the economy; the role of the turnpike in the region. How local government and NJDOT's transportation policies can integrate.

Talvin Davis, Manager of Freight Planning and Intermodal Coordination, NJDOT told the group that NJDOT is doing a statewide freight plan. Present and future freight issues will be examined in producing this plan. He said the agency is aware of the problem and is working to solve it.

Ms. Strauss-Weider said there are a number of available freight studies on her website www.as-w.com

Mr. Davis presented the activities of the freight committee. The committee had met once since the last Forum meeting. At that meeting there was a presentation of the motor carrier safety inspection – state police roadside inspection of over-sized vehicle. The Penns Neck model was used to show existing and future truck volumes and impact of truck diversion with build or no build TIP projects. The next meeting will examine origin/destination on truck regionally to get a sense of travel patterns. A motor carrier will be invited to talk about the logistics of trucks in our area.

Ms. Brake said NJDOT engineering have to figure out what is happening to freight in the region. Look at demand generation and figure out how it can be shaped instead of being reactive.

Wendy Benchley, Councilwoman, Princeton Borough told the group that part of the battle is what is going on in congress, not enough funding for rail freight. She called upon Congressman Rush Holt to comment.

Congressman Rush Holt said passenger rail is set up for failure. Freight is *liaise-faire* which is not going to work. Major effort is needed just to hold the line open, the majority not interested in looking at forward planning for rail. The northeast can support passenger rail but there is a movement to privatize and cut it loose. There is an amendment to the

Transportation Appropriation Bill for a broader view of transportation as affecting quality of life and not just moving people and goods.

Lawrence-Hopewell Trail Project

Pam Mount, Councilwoman, Lawrence Township gave the presentation. The concept for the project started a year ago. Bristol Myers Squibb was instrumental in the launching of the project. A task force was created and meeting schedule was established. The group drafted a mission statement and obtained 501(c)(3) status. The project is a 20-mile path through county and municipal parks, existing roadways, farmland and open space. The project is a public/private partnership. There are a few easements on private property that were donated for the trail. Funding for the project have been very diversified – state grants, land from state, county and municipalities sources as well as private donation and corporate donations. There is continuing public outreach at all levels enabling communities to be part of the process. She said that there is the possibility of linking Princeton Township and the Hopewell Park system. She hopes that this would be the spine to which other trails would link and build a network.

In reply to the question of liability on private property, Chris Tarr, Esq., Greater Mercer TMA said by law once the donation is made to a 501(c)(3) corporation the property owner is relieved of liability. He said there are 2 or 3 property owners willing to donate.

Pam Hersh, Director Community Development, Princeton University said it was crucial the trail serve a larger purpose than recreational.

In reply Ms. Mount said a large portion goes to Lawrenceville and it is dense but it is unfortunate it is limited by I-95.

South Jersey Light Rail Bus Connection

Alan Maiman, Manager, Bus Service Planning, New Jersey Transit presented to the Forum the connectivity of the South Jersey Light Rail (SJLR). He said there are 20 stations between Trenton and Camden on the SJLR and it is important for local bus network to provide connections. He said improvements are in two major categories – passenger friendly information and fare initiative. He spoke of the partnership New Jersey Transit had forged with Burlington and Camden counties to foster an efficient network. Local shuttle service is being funded through CMAQ, JARC and New Jersey Transit community shuttle program. Funds from the 3 sources have been pooled to establish 7 services. For the existing bus routes 452, 419, 409 and 413 there will be improvements to the schedule to provide timed transfers to the SJLR at different points. Passenger information will be improved to avoid confusion. New Jersey Transit is working on a number of initiatives in corporation with City of Trenton. Combined timetable, new identification logo with a Trenton theme, bus information wall at the Trenton train station and upgraded bus shelters incorporation with the City of Trenton are some of the initiatives in the pipeline. Mr. Maiman said New Jersey Transit is instituting a special fare structure for the SJLR. There will be light rail/bus combination transfer fare and light rail/NE corridor/bus transfer fare.

Ms. Hersh said public officials should be pressured into using mass transportation system to change the image of taking buses. New Jersey Transit should work with corporations to provide incentives to use this resource. It is important to get the word out about the availability of transit and get the leadership involved in taking transit.

Mr. Maiman said New Jersey Transit is conducting outreach to businesses. They have been working with the TMAs who have been doing an excellent job in providing public outreach.

Ms. Brake said the number one concern with transit is land-use. She asked if land use issues are being addressed.

Mr. Coscia replied that as a result of TOD work that was done at DVRPC around some of the SJLR station, zoning ordinances are being changed.

Jack Kanarek, Senior Director, Project Development, New Jersey Transit, said they are building on DVRPC's work in Camden and will be doing similar work at other SJLR stations. Riverside now has transit village designation and there will be redevelopment around the station.

Sandra Brillhart, Executive Director, GMTMA said they were developing a transit map for Mercer County which will go a long way in supporting SJLR. She said state employees are now being offered tax credit for taking transit.

Ms. Benchley asked if New Jersey Transit was looking at the design of buses to make them more pedestrian friendly; they can be used for school children and senior citizens.

Mr. Maiman said the shelf life of a bus is approximately 12 years. In their last purchase 75 smaller buses were obtained. They are more area specific. The smaller buses are limited in where they can be used and when.

Anthony Gambilonghi, Middlesex County Planning Board asked if New Jersey Transit worked with the media to advertise bus routes to residents.

Mr. Maiman replied resources are limited. It is hard to do on an everyday basis but usually done for new or major investments.

Ron Reinhardt, Transit Center said his corporation is available for outreach.

Bus Rapid Transit

Don Shanis, Assistant Executive Director, Transportation and Intermodal Planning, DVRPC briefed the Forum on the progress of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Alternative Analysis. He said the Request for Proposals (RFP) had been distributed by New Jersey Transit and had generated a lot of interest. The proposals should be submitted by

September 25, 2003, after which they will be judged by a team. The recommended consultant will be presented to the New Jersey Transit Board in November. He spoke of the BRT Committee meeting held on July 1, 2003 with mention of the two presentations – Federal Transit Administration and Center for Urban Transportation Research, University of Southern Florida.

Paul Truban, NJDOT informed the Forum that they are providing technical support to BRT Analysis (staff and consultant services). They will provide a regional look at Smart Growth in Central New Jersey building on previous work that has been completed by the forum and determining where we need the densities to support BRT and their limits. This will serve as a first step/goal in aligning transportation investments with regional land use strategies and provide NJDOT and New Jersey Transit with a demonstration smart growth review process to be used to evaluate future transportation investments. The methodology is under development. An interagency meeting is being held on October 2, 2003 to discuss demographic scenarios to be used in the base year for the transit modeling. He said they are hoping to use some of the strategies developed through the Legislative Committee in this work (TDR & TED). He told the gathering they had met with West Windsor recently to begin discussions on biggest/most imminent areas of concern, the Wyeth tract and Sarnoff and will be reaching out to other municipalities as well to discuss land use options.

Mr. Coscia said the BRT Analysis is viewed as a transportation study and the land use work will be carried out on a parallel track.

In reply to Mr. Gambilonghi's question on the northern limits of the study area, Mr. Truban said the study area will go from New Brunswick to Trenton and at least from Princeton in the west to West Windsor in the east.

Mr. Coscia said timing is very important for BRT; we will be in competition with places like Atlanta and Los Angeles, large metropolitan areas, for limited federal funds.

Legislative Committee Update

Bob Wolfe, Princeton Forrestal Center started the update by informing participants the committee had not met during the summer but there had been some progress in Transfer Development Rights (TDR), Transportation Enhancement District (TED) and Regional Planning Protocol.

Mayor Cantu said a great deal of work done at the state level within the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) on the proposed TDR legislation. They are doing outreach to many groups. There are still issues and an effort is being made to resolve these issues and work closely in a cooperative way to make sure TDR becomes law. The disagreements are minor and resolvable. TDR is important to Smart Growth and the legislative committee will continue to provide input to DCA.

Ms. Brake told the Forum Regional Planning Partnership had put a roundtable together of local business entities since the last Forum meeting to discuss TED. There were concerns on how big an impact fee local will be imposed on local businesses. She spoke of

modifying existing Transportation Development District (TDD) legislation instead of a whole legislation in the form of TED.

Dialogue

Mr. Coscia spoke briefly on two documents included in Forum participants packets – draft letter to mayors asking for their input in developing the next generation of highway projects in the region; and DVRPC comments on the Penns Neck Area DEIS. He said it is unusual that the DEIS did not include a recommended local solution.

Roger Sager, Deputy Executive Director of Policy Development, Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission (DRJTBC) said the commission has started the I-95/Scudder Falls Bridge project – preliminary engineering and environmental documentation phase. This is a multiyear, multimillion-dollar study for the improvements to I-95/Scudders Fall Bridge. PennDOT, NJDOT and DRJTBC have all agreed to work to complete this phase of the I-95/Scudder Falls improvement project in a timely manner, the goal being three years. Currently the project schedule is being finalized and the Public Participation Plan is being organized, the plan is to have workshops, public information sessions as well as having newsletters, website and hotline for input to the project. An Interagency Advisory Committee (IAC) is being established and meetings are being planned. Along with PennDOT and NJDOT, FHWA is also assisting in this phase of the project. The DVRPC is a resource for the project and was instrumental in developing the model used in the initial Southerly Crossings Corridor report. Another project is the Route 1 bridge project that will widen the northbound lane and help improve the traffic flow to maintain a level of service “D” for this bridge.

In reply to Mr. Coscia question concerning funding for the project Mr. Sager said the current project (preliminary engineering and environmental documentation) for the I-95/Scudder Falls Bridge project will be funded by DRJTBC. The Final Engineering phase will also be funded by DRJTBC

Next Steps

The meeting concluded with discussions of the next meeting and ended with the decision to hold the next Forum meeting in January 2004.