

# DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

## Highlights of the Central New Jersey Transportation Forum Meeting of January 23, 2004

### Attendees (79):

Name	Organization
Richard Amodei	STV, Inc.
Rosemarie Anderson	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Nicholas Angarone	Mercer County Planning
William Ankner	Transportation Solutions
John Araneo	French & Parrello Associates
Dan Baer	STV, Inc.
William Beetle	DMJM & Harris
Wendy Benchley	Princeton Borough Council
Joe Bertoni	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Martin Bierbaum	Municipal Land Use Center
Peter Bilton	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Arnold Bloch	Howard Stein Hudson
Dianne Brake	Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
Tom Clark	New Jersey Transit
Paul Cohn	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Mike Collins	New Jersey Economic Development Authority
Susan Conlon	Berrien City Neighborhood Association
John Coscia	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
James Crane	Ridewise of Raritan
Stephen Decter	West Windsor Township
Elizabeth Donahue	Lawrence Township
Larry Englisher	TranSystems Corporation
Emi Faloughi	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Frank Fechter	Hopewell Township Police Department
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
Gail Gimbel	DMJM Harris
Danielle Graves	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Linda Greenstein	NJ State Assembly
Pam Hersh	Princeton University
Jim Hess	Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
Martin Hull	Michael Baker Jr., Incorporated

Jack Kanarek	New Jersey Transit
Dennis Keck	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Arlene Kemp	Hopewell Township
Katherine Kish	Chamber of Commerce
Michael LaPlace	Plainsboro Township
Nancy Laudemberger	Hightstown Borough
Kenneth Lin	STV, Inc.
Charles Latini	Office of Smart Growth
Bruce Looloian	Advance Realty Group
Tom Marchwinski	NJ Transit
Paula McGuire	West Windsor Citizen for Transportation Alternative
Alison Miller	West Windsor Township
Kendall Miller	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Jack Molenaar	Plainsboro Township
Diane Murphy-Atkins	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Zoe Neaderland	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Daniel O'Connell	United Transportation Union
Joseph O'Neill	Princeton Borough
Carmen Orta	Federal Transit Administration
Peter Palmer	Somerset County Freeholder
David Parris	Penns Neck Community
Tushar Patel	URS Corporation
Stanley Platt	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Pete Rayner	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Stephen Roach	Developers Diversified Realty Corporation
Carlos Rodrigues	Office of Smart Growth
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
Ruby Siegel	SYSTRA Consulting
Lee Solow	Princeton Regional Planning Board
Jennifer Stuart	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Ron Tindall	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)
Paul Truban	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
George Ververides	Middlesex County Planning
Herman Volk	Office of Smart Growth
Patricia Ward	West Windsor Township
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, January 23, 2004 at Sarnoff Corporation in Princeton, NJ. Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein made a brief appearance. Assistant Commissioner Dennis Keck gave a presentation on the findings of the Blue Ribbon Commission Report. STV, the consulting team performing the BRT Alternative Analysis was presented to the Forum. William Beetle, DMJM Harris, NJDOT consultants discussed the scope of work for Route 1 Regional Smart Growth Strategy. Updates were presented on Freight and Legislative Committee activities. The meeting concluded with Mr. Coscia announcing the next meeting date – April 23, 2004.*

John Coscia, Executive Director of DVRPC, called the meeting to order. Forum participants introduced themselves.

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

Mr. Coscia asked for amendments to the highlights of the September 12, 2003 Forum meeting. The motion was carried to approve the highlights as written.

### **Blue Ribbon Commission and NJ Transportation Trust Fund Renewal**

Assistant Commissioner Dennis Keck, NJDOT gave the presentation on the Blue Ribbon Commission Report. He began his presentation by informing the group, the report was commissioned by Governor McGreevey and released in November 2003. It highlighted the fact that the New Jersey transportation system is in desperate disrepair. He said the state was congested and being located in the middle of the northeast between Boston and Washington DC presented many challenges to the transportation system, as a drive through state. The interstate system has begun to wear out. An immediate infusion of funding is needed just to complete the necessary existing repairs. Every year another bridge becomes structurally deficient. He stated that New Jersey Transit, the state transit agency is in a similar predicament with funding needs to repair, replace and maintain infrastructure. In the same quandary is the state's aviation and freight sector. In order to keep the infrastructure at today's level mass investment of funds are necessary. The state must fund a transportation program to begin improving the condition of the transportation network. The Blue Ribbon Commission recommended the state's gas tax must be increased by 12½ cent per gallon but possibly up to 15 cents. With the pending re-authorization of new transportation Act, there is some question about federal funding. He said the Report also discusses the management of the state Transportation Trust Fund (TTF). The impending insolvency of the TTF is directly linked to decisions made over the past twelve years to increase reliance on bonding, to extend the terms of bonds and to raise spending caps without additional revenues to keep pace with needs. Expenditures from the fund kept increasing and were not replenished. He said in fiscal year 2005, the TTF will be depleted; all money generated will be needed for debt funding. NJDOT will have to tighten its boot-straps – projects will be delayed; operations affected and so will local aid programs. NJDOT will be looking at all their programs and determine how the

available funds will last for the next two fiscal years in order to profit from federal funding. He said TTF was set up as a self-replenishing pay-as-you-go mechanism it now pays out millions of dollars annually in debt service. NJDOT is now in the process of drafting a capital program that shows reductions and cuts in numerous programs. This will be shared with the MPOs. He said if action is not taken in the near future the state risks the ability to draw down federal funding for transportation in the future. Mr. Keck concluded his presentation by telling the gathering that he had faith in the state executives and that he did not believe they would do anything to jeopardize the transportation infrastructure.

In the discussion that followed, Dan O'Connell, Director, United Transportation Union stated that education of the New Jersey public was vital to the success of the Blue Ribbon report recommendations. He suggested that the CJFT lead the way in this education process on the importance of adequate funding of our transportation infrastructure.

Mr. Coscia added that he hopes the governor will get the legislative support needed to get the funds required for large-scale capital investment in New Jersey transportation infrastructure.

Bob Wolf, Chairman of Legislative Sub-committee told the gathering that the committee is recommending that the Forum endorse the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission Report via a letter to the Governor and the NJ legislature. The letter should state the importance of rapid implementation of the report's recommendations.

Mr. O'Connell suggested also sending the letter to the congressional delegation.

Dennis Keck said it was important to emphasize TTF accountability.

Diane Brake, Director, Regional Planning Partnership added that whereas TTF integrity is recognized, it is important that if the resources are not available through the trust fund then the money should be found from other sources to finance transportation.

Freeholder Peter Palmer, Somerset County agreed public education is necessary about the gas tax increase. He said it is important that any increase in gas tax be dedicated solely to infrastructure investment without which New Jersey's economy would suffer. Parkway tolls and the TTF issues should be kept separate.

Wendy Benchley, Princeton Borough Council, mentioned that a letter was fine but a group was needed to actively follow up on the letter and educate both the legislature and the public. A campaign is needed with letters to the editor and others.

Mr. Coscia told the gathering that New Jersey Alliance for Action is leading the charge in that regard.

Katherine Kish, Chamber of Commerce indicated that the Alliance is doing a good job but the business community needs to be aware. It would be wise to educate and involve the

business community about the issues facing them if transportation infrastructure were to deteriorate further.

Kenneth Wedeen, Planner, Somerset County Planning said freeholders and planning boards should also be targeted

Mr. Coscia replied that these entities could be reached via MPOs. He said he could present it to the DVRPC board and will encourage NJTPA to do the same. By the MPOs placing this on their agendas they can get the counties involved.

Mr. Coscia put forward a motion to draft a letter to the Governor that would be distributed to the legislature, the congressional delegation and MPO's to make the Blue Ribbon Report recommendations and findings a priority on their upcoming agendas. The motion was carried.

### **Bus Rapid Transit**

STV Incorporated, Vice President, Dan Baer started the presentation that included study approach and schedule. He said it is hoped that the study would produce creative cost-effective measures for relief on what is termed one of New Jersey's worst roadways. He briefly spoke of the presentation agenda and the STV's team organization. At this point Richard Amodei, Project Manager continued, he mentioned some of the projects he was/is involved in. He introduced the other members of his team and they spoke briefly of their experience and other project involvement – Tushar Patel, URS Corporation, Travel Demand; Arnold Bloch, Howard Stein Hudson, Public Involvement; Larry Englishier, TranSystems Corporation, Transportation Planning, William Anker, Transportation Solutions, Financial Planning; and Ken Lin, Operations Planning. Mr. Amodei spoke of the existing transportation/land-use problems and growth in the corridor. Transportation/land-use opportunities were described: strong local support from the municipalities and business community, existing transportation system seeking natural hubs and gateways and the influence of local development plans sighting right-of way and mixed land-use development options. In describing the project approach, establishing local and regional context was top on their list and focused study process include focusing on "early wins". STV will incorporate a coordinated public involvement component including open house meetings, technical workshops, websites and newsletters. The project will span a 12-month period. The study team's next steps include public involvement start-up; development of purpose and needs; early market analysis; creation of "early wins"; and provision of necessary work to advance the project into environmental analysis.

Ms. Benchley said that a lot of information on Bus Rapid Transit was already available. She asked if the consultants would initially look at how local jitney systems connected with the proposed BRT alignment. She indicated that a major problem so far with the BRT was how well it integrated with local jitney service.

Mr. Amodei responded that it was a priority to identify local travel systems and patterns and how well they could be integrated with the BRT system.

Mr. Coscia stated that four agencies were responsible for funding the BRT study but that the overall lead would be NJ Transit. Reports to the forum on the progress of the study would be made quarterly. A subcommittee made up of communities directly affected by the BRT alignment would meet and be informed on a more regular basis. He said buy in by local communities was imperative to the study's progress and acceptance. In addition, the congressional delegation's involvement was important to try and get the project on the New Starts list to get funding.

Carmen Orta, Community Planner, Federal Transit Administration Region II said there are specific requirements to get on the New Starts list. The consultants should keep in contact with the FTA to make sure all federal requirements are fulfilled.

### **Route 1 Regional Smart Growth Strategy**

Brent Barnes, NJDOT and William Beetle, DMJM Harris gave the presentation of the Route 1 Regional Smart Growth Strategy. Mr. Barnes said the project is intended to support three on-going NJDOT studies on US Route 1—Route 1 widening in South Brunswick; Route 1 and Franklin Corner Road; and Route 1 Mercer County CMS and Corridor Study in West Windsor and Lawrence. The project will also support the New Jersey Transit BRT Alternatives Analysis study. He said limited funds for transportation together with current sprawl and congestion problems required development of a regional economic and transportation strategy that was both sustainable and consistent with smart growth outcomes. In addition, stronger coordination among public agencies to support a regional smart growth strategy is necessary.

Mr. Beetle said future outcomes from implementation of this strategy would include: People living near their jobs in affordable housing cutting back on long travel distances; attractive, diverse and affordable environments for residents, business and visitors alike; growth and/or relocation of high value and strategic growth jobs to the region because high skilled workers can easily access their jobs; and redevelopment of abandoned and/or underutilized buildings into housing, office and recreational space.

Collaboration will be sought between the 15 municipalities in the Route 1 corridor, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset Counties, the region's MPOs, NJ Transit and other major regional government/industry institutions and associations. The Route 1 Smart Growth Strategy work plan will provide analysis and information to frame and advance a regional strategy; work at both regional and local planning levels; and builds from an iterative process of discussion, refinement and consensus. The collaboration steps consist of six elements. The final product will be an integrated and coherent regional/local strategy that would provide access to smart growth planning and implementation tools carefully adapted to fit the region's transportation and development needs.

George Ververides, Director, Middlesex County Planning said he was concerned about the number of analyses moving ahead at the same time – smart growth study; BRT alternative analysis and cross acceptance. It seems much of the content would be a duplication of effort. He said he would like to see this strategy study started first and then fed into the BRT study.

Mr. Coscia replied that the study will continue and hopefully add to the BRT work but would also provide information to a wider region. He said it is crucial the BRT work is not delayed.

Mr. Barnes said he shared Mr. Ververides concerns but has spoken with NJ Transit and consultants who assured him that both studies were being closely coordinated.

Roger Sager, Deputy Executive Director of Policy Development, Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission told the Forum that the Commission's Southerly Crossing Project was going forward and they should also be tied in with this project.

Alison Miller, West Windsor Township Council and Planning Board said she was encouraged by the outline of the planning process. However, it would be advisable to discuss retrofitting existing patterns of development into the smart growth mould instead of just making sure new development is built along smart growth principles. She added that if existing sprawl were not retrofitted, then there would be no solution to existing problems. Municipalities would be receptive to ideas that helped them solve their current problems.

### **Planned Projects Status Report**

Stanley Platt, DVRPC spoke of the update to the Planned Project Status Report. The report was first issued in May 2003 and was updated to reflect the current status of projects and those that were added to the TIP for fiscal year 2004. He also discussed the municipal highway program outreach initiated September 2003. Only six municipalities responded and there would be a further outreach.

Ms. Brake was concerned how this project fits in the Forums overall strategies and goals.

### **Updates**

Mr. Wolfe gave the Forum an update on the Legislative Committee's recent activities and current status of initiatives. He began with TDR and said it came closer than ever before to being passed by the state legislature. There was controversy about linking TDR to the State Plan and linkage with Council on Affordable Housing. The committee plans to reach out to the NJ Builders Association to get an understanding of the issues. He said the committee views TED as important especially as it relates to advancing transportation initiatives but does not seem to be advancing in the legislature. Tax reform does not appear to be a priority for the Governor's administration or legislature at this time. There is strong support for impact fees but the committee has not invested much in it. If the administration comes up with a bill the committee will review and comment. It appears to be a high priority for the administration. By all indications this initiative will move forward quickly. Ms. Brake told the gathering that the Regional Planning Protocol has not advanced in the way the Forum has proposed.

Louise Wilson, Mayor, Montgomery Township said she attended a mayors meeting in Trenton with the Governor and Legislature and there is support for TDR and impact fees and there is indication that both initiatives will move forward quickly. She said there is a bi-partisan push for a constitutional convention. The Governor will not support the convention if all it addresses is the revenue side. There may be some support if it addresses both sides – revenue and spending.

Paul Truban, Freight Planning & Intermodal Coordination, NJDOT gave the Freight Committee update. There are a number of freight initiatives taking place not only at NJDOT but also in other states. He spoke of NJDOT's statewide rail freight master plan. He said the committee had decided on areas of focus. Two general themes and/or needs came out of the last meeting of the committee.

- a) Identifying and understanding freight attractors, freight generators, and freight distribution networks (locally and regionally). He said a case study into the distribution patterns of goods in the region would be a good basis for understanding the current freight situation.
- b) Strategies to aid better public understanding of how land use decisions affect the flow of freight as well as ways to get goods from trucks onto rail. Identify where the public think the trucks could be (what are wishes and desires). Products would include freight demand management and land use management techniques to accommodate more efficient location of freight. For example looking at the location of warehousing and how this might influence truck traffic within a given municipalities.

The Freight committee will be meeting again in February to finalize what their area of concentration will be.

Mr. Coscia added that freight was critical especially with the new hours of work rule for truckers. He mentioned that DVRPC was undertaking a multimodal, strategic corridor study focused on freight movement.

Dennis Keck also pointed out that it was important to learn the impact on infrastructure in moving freight on municipalities through case study. He said this is a growing concern throughout the state.

## Dialogue

Jack Kanarek, Senior Director, Project Development, New Jersey Transit updated the Forum on regional NJ Transit initiatives. He said the Secaucus Transfer station opened on November 15, 2003 and operations are being closely monitored. NJ Transit board of directors announced a February 15, 2004 opening date for the Trenton to Camden light rail line. NJ Transit was working closely with Hamilton Township to stimulate transit-orientated development around the train station.

Martin Bierbaum, Director Land Use Center, College of New Jersey informed the Forum that the Land Use Center was now open at the College of New Jersey. The Center is funded by a FHWA grant, they are still in the process of setting up offices. They are doing reconnaissance work to identify needs. The Center will aim to focus on Smart Growth initiatives, working closely with municipalities in this process and making sure focus was on implementation rather than planning.

### Next Steps

The meeting concluded with the announcement of the next meeting date, Friday, April 23, 2004.

