

**ONE PAGE OVERVIEW**  
**Central Jersey Transportation Forum**  
**February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Meeting**

Welcome and Introductions

There were over 58 participants, including representatives from eleven municipalities, two counties, two MPOs, and various agencies and organizations (for-profit and non-profit). Frank Gambatese, Mayor of South Brunswick, welcomed everyone and addressed the challenges and frustrations of trying to solve transportation problems in the current funding environment.

Forum Business

Jack Kanarek, Senior Project Manager at Dewberry and Chair of the Transit Action Team, provided a summary of the joint Action Team meeting held on February 19<sup>th</sup>, where the potential cancellation of the Route 655 bus was a major topic of discussion. As a result, a letter was drafted to encourage NJ Transit to continue operating the route. After a brief discussion, the Forum voted unanimously to send a revised version of the letter supporting the continuation of the Route 655 bus.

Better Connecting Economic Development & Transportation Planning: Redevelopment Support for Municipalities & Counties

Alan Miller, Redevelopment Coordinator and Brownfields Program Manager, and Barry Ableman, Principal Planner, both from the NJ Office for Planning Advocacy (OPA), provided details about a number of programs and initiatives offered through their agency. Many opportunities for interagency coordination and strategic planning for redevelopment were identified, as well as resources and incentives to assist with these efforts.

Status of Renewing the Transportation Trust Fund

John Donnadio, Executive Director of the New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC), spoke about the status of the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF), which will become insolvent on July 1<sup>st</sup>. He raised the issue of the huge maintenance burden that is placed on counties. While county roads carry over 50 percent of New Jersey's traffic, they receive only about 2.5 percent of state transportation funds. Unfortunately, with many seats in the NJ Legislature up for reelection in the fall, it seems unlikely that action will be taken to find a long-term solution to the TTF issue. There was discussion of potential action the Forum could take as a group, but there was not consensus on an effective action to take at this time.

Implementing Smart Growth/Complete Streets Policies

There was a brief discussion of the challenges of implementing smart growth and complete streets policies in New Jersey to help shape contents for a future meeting.

Smart Growth for Major Events or Emergencies

Chase Cottrell, Principal Planner at the NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, gave a presentation about a pilot program to develop local Strategic Community Resiliency Plans (SCRPs). The functions of an SCRPs are to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a community, define resiliency goals, propose achievable steps to meet both short and long term goals, and match these goals with available tools and funding opportunities. Future plans include the development of assessment tools and guidance regarding how to fund resiliency improvements.

Brief Updates & Dialogue

Peter Cantu, Mayor of Plainsboro Township, provided an update from the Five Mayors' Coalition on the status of the Penns Neck project. Although sympathetic, NJDOT Commissioner Fox said it's challenging to come up with solutions without a fix for the TTF. Shing-Fu Hsueh, Mayor of West Windsor Township, gave an update about the potential redevelopment of the Howard Hughes Corporation/American Cyanamid site. West Windsor does not have any clear idea of what the developers have in mind for the site at this time. Barry Seymour, Executive Director of DVRPC, announced the recent launch of the Mercer County Incident Management Task Force, which will include Route 1.

**Meeting Summary  
Central Jersey Transportation Forum  
February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**ATTENDEES:** over 58 participants – Please advise if you attended but are not on the list.

<b>Mayors</b>			
Peter	Cantu	Mayor	Plainsboro Township
Liz	Lempert	Mayor	Princeton
Frank	Gambatese	Mayor	South Brunswick Township
Shing-Fu	Hsueh	Mayor	West Windsor Township

<b>Other Municipal Staff</b>			
Jeffrey	Wilkerson	Principal Planner	City of Trenton, Division of Planning
Theodore	Chase	Councilman	Franklin Township Council & Planning Board
Bruce	Rydel	Planning Director	Hillsborough Township Planning & Zoning Department
James	Parvesse	Township Engineer	Lawrence Township
Mike	Costello	Trails Committee	Monroe Township
John	Riggs	Director of Planning and Environmental Protection	Monroe Township
Gail	Smith	Engineer	Montgomery Township
Les	Varga	Director	Plainsboro Township Office of Planning & Zoning
Arthur	Lehrhaupt	Chair	Plainsboro Township Planning Board
Bob	Kiser	Municipal Engineer	Princeton
Deanna	Stockton	Assistant Engineer	Princeton
Ralph	Widner	Board Member	Princeton Traffic and Transportation Committee
Marvin	Reed	Chairman - Master Plan Committee	Planning Board of Princeton
Lee	Solow	Planning Director	Planning Board of Princeton
Ann	Bell	Administrative Officer	Robbinsville Township
Bryan	Bidlack	Director of Planning	South Brunswick Township
Jerry	Lutin	Planning Board Member	South Brunswick Township

<b>Counties</b>			
Tony	Gambilonghi	Supervising Planner for Transportation	Middlesex County Office of Planning
George	Ververides	Director	Middlesex County Office of Planning
Walt	Lane	Director of Planning	Somerset County Planning Division

<b>Metropolitan Planning Organizations</b>			
Jesse	Buerk	Senior Transportation Planner	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Nathan	Howard	Intern	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Zoe	Neaderland	Manager, Transp. Safety & Congestion Mgmt.	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Barry	Seymour	Executive Director	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Zenobia	Fields	Director, Department of Planning	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
Lois	Goldman	Director of Regional Planning	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
Doug	Greenfeld	Manager, Sustainability and Plan Development	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

<b>Other Regional Bodies</b>			
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Richard	McClellan	Director - Community Affairs	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Chad	Dixson	Mobility Manager	Greater Mercer TMA
Cheryl	Kastrenakes	Executive Director	Greater Mercer TMA
Bill	Neary	Executive Director; Forum Chair	Keep Middlesex Moving TMA
Basil	Giletto	Chair of Transportation Committee	Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce (MRCC)
Joan	McGee	Watershed Policy Specialist	Stony Brook - Millstone Watershed Association
Janna	Chernetz	New Jersey Advocate	Tri-State Transportation Campaign

State Departments			
Jim	Requa	Director, Special Projects	NJ Department of Community Affairs
Barry	Ableman	Principal Planner	NJ Department of State, Office for Planning Advocacy
Alan	Miller	Redevelopment Coordinator, Brownfields Program Manager	NJ Department of State, Office for Planning Advocacy
Danielle	Graves	Project Engineer	NJ Department of Transportation, Bureau of Statewide Strategies
Tom	Houck	Transportation Planner	NJ Department of Transportation, Bureau of Statewide Strategies
Susan	Weber	Supervising Transportation Analyst	NJ Department of Transportation, Bureau of Statewide Strategies
Neha	Galgali	Principle Engineer	NJ Department of Transportation, Division of Statewide Planning
Andy	Swords	Director	NJ Department of Transportation, Division of Statewide Planning
Chase	Cottrell	Principal Planner	NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness
Tom	Clark	Regional Manager, Gov. & Community Relations	NJ Transit
Mike	Viscardi	Senior Facilities Manager	NJ Transit

Federal Agencies			
Calvin	Edghill	Planning & Environment Team Leader; Research	Federal Highway Administration, New Jersey

Other			
Jack	Kanarek	Senior Project Manager; Chair , Transit Action Team	Dewberry
John	Donnadio	Executive Director	New Jersey Association of Counties
Cyndi	Steiner	Executive Director	New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition
Curt	Emmich	Associate	Picus Associates
Jim	Constantine	Consultant	Princeton Future
Jim	McKenna	Realtor	Realty of Princeton
Eric	Payne	Realtor Sales Associate	Smart Traffic Solutions & Weichert Realty
Jerry	Foster	President	West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance

## 1. **Welcome and Introductions**

There were over 58 participants, including representatives from eleven municipalities, two counties, two MPOs, and various agencies and organizations (for-profit and non-profit). Bill Neary, Forum Chair and Executive Director of Keep Middlesex Moving TMA, welcomed everyone. Frank Gambatese, Mayor of South Brunswick, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. He addressed the challenges and frustrations of trying to solve transportation problems in the current funding environment and expressed his hope that the Forum can help push Central Jersey to achieve major accomplishments.

Everyone introduced himself or herself.

## **2. Forum Business**

Mr. Neary asked for approval of the November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014 meeting summary; it was unanimously approved. Mr. Neary requested that voting members update the letters designating their official representatives at the Forum. He also mentioned the survey forms that were handed out to everyone at the meeting. Barry Seymour, Executive Director of DVRPC, added that the surveys are intended to help give staff direction and prioritize tasks going forward. Everyone took a few minutes to fill out the survey forms. Results will be shared at the next meeting.

Jack Kanarek, Senior Project Manager at Dewberry and Chair of the Transit Action Team, provided a summary of the joint Action Team meeting that was held on February 19<sup>th</sup>, where the potential cancellation of the Route 655 bus was a major topic of discussion. The route was launched three years ago as a public/private partnership. It serves Princeton, the University Medical Center of Princeton at Plainsboro, and Plainsboro Township. One of the major components of the funding for the route came from federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds, but those funds are set to expire. Mr. Kanarek said that although the route has not met ridership expectations, it does have a stable, consistent ridership. At the Action Teams meeting, participants felt that the route needs more time and recommended drafting a letter to encourage NJ Transit to continue it. Staff prepared a draft letter and included it in the meeting folders.

Mr. Neary opened the floor to discussion of the draft letter, which included the following highlights:

- Peter Cantu, Mayor of Plainsboro Township, said that he's been involved with the Route 655 bus since the beginning. He described the players in the public/private partnership that helped get the route funded, and said it provides an important link between Princeton and Plainsboro, not just to the hospital, but to residences, businesses, and other important destinations. He stated that he hopes he and the 655 Partners group will have an opportunity to meet with NJ Transit and figure out how to salvage the route. With both Princeton and Plainsboro growing, ridership should build over time. Mayor Cantu added that he remembers similar struggles when the Route 600 bus first launched.
- Tom Clark, Regional Manager of Government and Community Relations at NJ Transit, said he would bring Mr. Cantu's and the Forum's concerns to the attention of management at NJ Transit.
- Calvin Edghill, Planning and Environment Team Leader at FHWA, recommended looking into whether it might be possible to extend the CMAQ funding for two years to cover operations costs. [This was investigated and it is not possible to extend the funding.]
- Mayor Cantu made a motion to send the letter of support for the Route 655 bus. The motion was seconded by Liz Lempert, Mayor of Princeton.
- Mr. Seymour said that the Forum's letter of support should emphasize the public/private partnership that financed the Route 655 bus, as well as the partnership between two MPOs (DVRPC and NJTPA). Mr. Neary added that the letter should emphasize the route's potential for ridership growth. Mr. Clark suggested also including language about the 655 partners requesting a meeting with NJ Transit to discuss the route. Ms. Neaderland said that the draft letter would be revised and circulated before being sent out.
- Mr. Seymour conducted a roll-call vote and the Forum voted unanimously to send a revised version of the letter supporting the continuation of the Route 655 bus.

## **3. Better Connecting Economic Development & Transportation Planning: Redevelopment Support for Municipalities & Counties**

Alan Miller, Redevelopment Coordinator and Brownfields Program Manager, and Barry Ableman, Principal Planner, both from the NJ Office for Planning Advocacy (OPA), provided details about a number of programs and initiatives offered through their agency.

- Mr. Miller began by providing some context about the OPA, which has moved departments several times, and now resides within the state's Business Action Center.

- Brownfield redevelopment is one major department of the OPA. The Brownfields department is not a regulatory agency, but it works closely with regulatory agencies. The department works to promote good remediation and redevelopment projects, whether the ultimate end use is open space, housing, business, or other. In New Jersey, a brownfield is defined as any former or current commercial or industrial site, currently vacant or underutilized and on which there has been, or there is suspected to have been, a discharge of a contaminant. This broad definition means that many projects qualify for assistance from the state. Mr. Miller added that there are some financial incentives for brownfield redevelopment available through the Economic Opportunity Act of 2013, including funds to reimburse developers up to 75 percent for site remediation activities.
- The Brownfield Redevelopment Task Force provides assistance to municipalities and counties in using brownfield redevelopment to help implement Smart Growth strategies in their plans. The BRTF has developed SiteMart, a website with an inventory of brownfield properties with the potential for redevelopment.
- The New Jersey Brownfields Interagency Work Group (IAWG) is comprised of a diverse group of state and federal agencies. The IAWG offers assistance, guidance and resources to municipalities and their redevelopment partners to help assess, remediate and redevelop brownfields. Mr. Miller mentioned the example of the Ewing Township General Motors and Naval Warfare Center Redevelopment Project. For this project, the IAWG helped line up resources, figure out how to leverage funds, and move from plans to reality.
- Mr. Ableman provided more details about SiteMart (available at [www.njbrownfieldsproperties.com/Search.aspx](http://www.njbrownfieldsproperties.com/Search.aspx)). SiteMart acts as a listing service for prospective buyers/developers, a planning tool for municipalities, counties, regional entities and state agencies, an archive for brownfields redevelopment successes, and a tool to verify a site's status as a brownfield. It also lists available incentives and provides links to additional sources of brownfields information. Mr. Ableman requested that if anyone notices issues with any records to please let him know. This could include sites that are no longer brownfields, new brownfield sites that are not identified on the website, or any other issues.
- Another group within the OPA is the Development Opportunity Interagency Team, which performs a similar function as the IAWG, but for non-brownfield properties. For example, this group has worked with Greater Mercer TMA and other partners to figure out how to provide transit options for major warehousing projects such as the new Amazon.com facility in Robbinsville and the planned Barnes and Noble facility in Middlesex County. Mr. Miller noted that residents of towns other than the one where the development is located will inevitably end up working at these job centers, so it's important to find ways to get employees to these sites, other than driving.
- Mr. Ableman described the Corporate Campus Initiative, which deals with underutilized or vacant corporate campuses. This program can also help municipalities evaluate future plans for these corporate campuses.
- Mr. Miller recommended that municipalities consider including an economic development element in their master plans. The OPA has found that many businesses, especially those coming in from out of state, look for these elements as an indicator of friendliness toward business. The OPA is working on an inventory of municipalities with economic development elements in their master plans. Mr. Miller asked for any municipalities with these elements in the Forum area to let him know.

Mr. Miller opened the floor to questions. The discussion included the following highlights:

- Mr. Neary asked for clarification regarding the OPA's interagency coordination efforts, particularly with regards to transportation. Mr. Miller said that NJDOT and NJ Transit, as well as county representatives, are critical members of the interagency team. He provided an example of how the DOT can help flag potential issues regarding access to a state road, in order to help applicants understand if what they're requesting is doable.
- Marvin Reed, Chairman of the Master Plan Committee for the Planning Board of Princeton, noted that in his experience, single-use office parks often underperform. However, adding a mix of uses such as housing and retail often requires zoning code changes which can be costly to implement. He asked if the OPA has resources to help with that issue. Mr. Miller said the OPA can help review ordinances and provide guidance, but that unfortunately they do not have the staffing to assist with

writing new ordinance language. They do, however, have many examples of successful language that they can share.

- Mr. Reed asked if the OPA offers any planning assistance grants. Mr. Miller said they do not. Xenobia Fields, Director of the Department of Planning at NJTPA, mentioned grants that are available from NJTPA through the Together North Jersey effort. Mr. Seymour said that DVRPC also has a grant program to support municipal planning.
- George Ververides, Director of the Middlesex County Office of Planning, asked the OPA to please include county staff in interagency discussions. Mr. Miller said that his office does make every attempt to include counties, but he noted that the OPA is only involved with or made aware of certain development projects. If a developer asks for assistance, the OPA reaches out to the municipality to make sure they're on board with the proposed project, at least in concept, before getting involved. He said that the OPA looks forward to working with counties as much as possible going forward.

#### **4. Status of Renewing the Transportation Trust Fund**

John Donnadio, Executive Director of the New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC), spoke about the status of the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF), which will become insolvent on July 1<sup>st</sup>. He raised the issue of the huge maintenance burden that is placed on counties. County roads carry over 50 percent of New Jersey's traffic, but they receive only about 2.5 percent of state transportation funds. Counties also maintain about 70 percent of the state's bridges, but the need for repairs has vastly outpaced funding. As of December 2014, NJDOT froze county funds and the bridge fund until the TTF issue could be figured out. NJAC conducted a survey to assess needs at the county level, and as a result, they are advocating for at least a doubling of the level of funding for county road work. Unfortunately, the outlook for action is not good. Mr. Donnadio noted that Governor Christie did not mention the TTF in his budget address, and said that with many seats in the NJ Legislature up for reelection in the fall, few legislators are willing to take action on this complex and controversial issue. At this point, he said he expects the legislature to figure out a way to borrow money again for a short-term fix. The TTF doesn't need to be authorized again until 2017, so hopefully a solution can be worked out over the course of the next year or two.

The floor was opened to discussion, including the following highlights:

- Janna Chernetz, New Jersey Advocate for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign (TSTC), said TSTC issued a press release responding to the Governor's statement that there was no transportation funding crisis. She added that TSTC has heard mention of potential fare hikes from NJ Transit as a result of the funding shortfalls. She asked if there was any action the Forum would be willing to take on the TTF issue.
- Mayor Cantu said that municipalities and counties have been issuing statements on the TTF issue for some time with no effect.
- Mr. Donnadio noted that Forward NJ has been successful at pressing the issue using a number of different channels to get information out to the public.
- Ms. Neaderland reiterated Ms. Chernetz's question, asking if there was something the Forum could do as a group. Mr. Neary suggested that it might help to focus on legislators.
- Mr. Donnadio said that one effective tactic is to identify and draw attention to specific projects in each town that will be jeopardized, delayed, or cancelled due to funding shortfalls. He said that NJAC has done this at the county level, but that a similar effort at the municipal level could potentially have effect. Mr. Neary mentioned that an update to the Forum's *Planned Project Status Report*, which tracks the progress of transportation and land development projects, is forthcoming.
- Jesse Buerk, Senior Transportation Planner at DVRPC, said he has been participating in DVRPC's ongoing NJ Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) update and that very few new projects are proposed to be added. He contrasted this with the most recent Pennsylvania TIP update, which followed the passage of a bi-partisan statewide transportation funding bill. He said one tactic that helped get the PA bill passed was when PennDOT instituted bridge weight restrictions as a result of funding shortfalls. Mr. Seymour explained that PennDOT weight-restricted 1,000 bridges all around the state, and at the same time, created a statewide list of potential transportation projects that could only happen if more funding was available. He noted that all of the legislators who voted for the

Pennsylvania bill were re-elected and added that many other states have recently passed bi-partisan transportation funding bills.

## **5. Implementing Smart Growth/Complete Streets Policies**

There was a brief discussion of the challenges of implementing smart growth and complete streets policies in New Jersey to help shape contents for a future meeting. Cyndi Steiner, Executive Director of the New Jersey Bike and Walk Coalition, noted that only three towns in New Jersey have signed up for the USDOT Mayors' Challenge for Safer People and Safer Streets, which invites Mayors and local elected officials to attend a summit meeting in Washington, D.C., and then pledge to take significant action over the next year to improve pedestrian and bicycle transportation safety. Cheryl Kastrenakes, Executive Director of Greater Mercer TMA, said she thought there might actually be a few more towns planning to participate than the three Ms. Steiner cited. Andy Swords, Director of the Division of Statewide Planning at NJDOT, said that the DOT continues to offer assistance to help implement Complete Streets projects.

## **6. Smart Growth for Major Events or Emergencies**

Chase Cottrell, Principal Planner at the NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, gave a presentation about a pilot program to develop local Strategic Community Resiliency Plans (SCRPs). The effort began in the aftermath of Super Storm Sandy, which caused unprecedented damage to many communities in New Jersey. However, Mr. Cottrell said that many incidents of damage or interruptions of municipal services were preventable. The functions of an SCRPs are to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a community, define resiliency goals, propose achievable steps to meet both short and long term goals, and match these goals with available tools and funding opportunities. One tool that was developed in the Secaucus pilot project was the Multi-Hazard Resiliency Index, which helps bring together planning, response, recovery, and mitigation activities to form a comprehensive resiliency plan. As part of the Secaucus pilot project, current and future inundation analysis was conducted by graduate students at Rutgers University's Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. The SCRPs program is looking to do more case studies in other interested communities. Future plans include the development of assessment tools and guidance regarding how to fund resiliency improvements. An SCRPs how-to guide is also in development.

Mr. Neary asked for an update on the status of state level evacuation routes. Mr. Cottrell said that some work has been done, but that there's still more to do. He encouraged anyone who's interested in learning more about SCRPs to get in touch with him.

## **7. Brief Updates and Dialogue**

Mayor Cantu provided an update from the Five Mayors' Coalition on the status of the Penns Neck project. The Coalition was informed by former NJDOT Commissioner Simpson that the original project was not fundable in the current economic climate. Consensus was reached on a scaled-down set of improvements, but funding was not available to advance the package. The Coalition met with current NJDOT Commissioner Fox in January and provided him with a history of the Penns Neck project and the traffic issues there. Commissioner Fox was sympathetic and familiar with the issues, but said that it's challenging to come up with solutions without a fix for the TTF. Mayor Cantu said that state legislators have expressed sympathy as well, but have not taken initiative to push for a solution to the Penns Neck problems. He encouraged Forum members to reach out to legislators about this issue.

Shing-Fu Hsueh, Mayor of West Windsor Township, gave an update about the potential redevelopment of the Howard Hughes Corporation/American Cyanamid site. In November 2014, the developers made a presentation to the West Windsor Council, but since then, there has been no progress. The Council advised the developers to bring a proposal to the Planning Board, but so far, they have not done so. West Windsor does not have any clear idea of what the developers have in mind for the site at this time. The Howard Hughes Corporation's headquarters are based in Texas, and it seems there is a lack of understanding as to how the development process works in New Jersey. Mayor Hsueh noted that the

site is currently zoned industrial and that West Windsor wants to work with the Howard Hughes Corporation to rezone the site. When that happens, there will be a public process. He confirmed that West Windsor has BRT requirements in its Master Plan, so BRT accommodations would be required at the Howard Hughes site.

Ms. Fields noted that the Together North Jersey effort is wrapping up in May. There will be a steering committee meeting in March and the draft regional plan will be presented.

Ms. Kastrenakes encouraged everyone to look into the Mayors' Challenge, mentioned earlier in the meeting. She said there needs to be a discussion of what's next with Complete Streets, especially regarding how to move from policies to projects. Motor vehicle fatalities are dropping nationwide, but pedestrian fatalities are on the rise, particularly in New Jersey. Hopefully, the Mayors' Challenge will provide technical assistance and perhaps eventually lead to funding. Mr. Edghill reiterated the point that pedestrian fatalities are on the rise and added that NHTSA is doing a nationwide assessment of bicyclist and pedestrian fatalities. He said it's very possible that the Mayors' Challenge will lead to either new funding opportunities or a push to use existing funds to address this problem.

Mr. Seymour announced the recent launch of the Mercer County Incident Management Task Force, which will include Route 1. He referred everyone to the accomplishments grid at the back of the meeting folders, which summarizes the Forum's latest achievements.

Mr. Neary asked any municipalities or counties who have not yet hosted the Smart Growth Road Show to get in touch with him or Ms. Neaderland and schedule a presentation. He also mentioned the upcoming Cyclovia event in New Brunswick on April 19<sup>th</sup>. This event closes streets to traffic for a day to allow everyone to get outside and be active in a safe, friendly environment.

Mr. Neary thanked Mayor Gambatese and South Brunswick Township for hosting the meeting, and thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the discussion.

There were no further comments and the meeting was adjourned.

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