

DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

**Highlights of the
Central New Jersey Transportation Forum
Meeting of April 19, 2001**

Attendees (58):

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Chris Altomari	Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association
Rosemarie Anderson	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
William Beetle	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Dianne Brake	The Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
David Campbell	Princeton Packet
Peter A. Cantu	Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc., Plainsboro Township
Jon Carnegie	Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute
Paul Cohn	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
John Coscia	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Elizabeth Donahue	Sarnoff Corporation
Jon Edwards	Hopewell Township
Dave Eilbacher	Bristol-Myers Squibb
Lou Fedele	Bristol-Myers Squibb
Andy Fekete	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
William Feldman	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
George Fries	West Windsor Township
Leslie Floyd	Mercer County Planning
Robert Goldstein	Helen Neuhaus and Associates
Constance Greiff	Rocky Hill Planning Board
Robert Grimm	New Jersey Turnpike Authority
Les Hamilton	East Amwell Township
Bruce Henry	Mercer County Engineering
Jim Hess	The Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
David Hojsak	New Jersey Office of State Planning
Joy Jensen	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Peggy Killmer	Regional Citizens Committee, DVRPC
Michael LaPlace	Plainsboro Township
Matt Ledger	New Jersey Transit
Richard LeTard	Montgomery Township
Karl Light	Hopewell Township – Taskforce of Traffic & Trucking
Andrea Lubin	Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute
Phyllis Marchand	Princeton Township
Thomas Marchwinski	New Jersey Transit
Marc Mariano	Monmouth County Planning Board
Bruce McCracken	Middlesex County Planning
George Morren	Rocky Hill Borough Council

Pam Mount	Lawrence Township Council
Helen Neuhaus	Helen Neuhaus and Associates
Carl Nittinger	NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection – Historic Preservation
Dan Nolan	Bristol-Myers Squibb
Jules Oroszvary	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Tushar Patel	URS Corporation
Jim Pivovar	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Stanley Platt	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Marvin Reed	Princeton Borough
Ron Reinhardt	Transit Center
Martin Robins	Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute
Tony Sabidussi	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
James J. Schwarzwald	New Jersey Transit
Walter Schmidlin	Sarnoff Corporation
Kent Scully	Montgomery Township
Jeanne Shreve	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Lee Solow	Princeton Regional Planning Board
Brian Sullivan	South Brunswick Township Planning
Peter Tolischus	Monroe Township
Ron Tindall	North Jersey Transportation Planning Association
Kenneth Wedeen	Somerset County Planning Department
Bob Wolfe	Princeton Forrestal Center

The meeting of the Central Jersey Transportation Forum took place on April 19, 2001 at Bristol-Myers Squibb's Hopewell facility. Three major private sector entities in the central Jersey region gave presentations on potential/proposed growth over the next 20 years and their role in alleviating congestion in the region. Forum member were brought up to date on the progress of the land-use/transit scenario. The meeting concluded with an information session on the Penns Neck Area (formerly Millstone Bypass) Environmental Impact Statement.

1. Introduction of Attendees and Two Minute Reports

John Coscia, Executive Director of DVRPC, welcomed guests and reminded everyone that the forum has an interactive format and encouraged members to participate throughout the meeting by asking questions and making comments. Introduction and two-minute reports followed.

2. Summary of the September Meeting's Highlights

Mr. Coscia asked for any changes to the September meeting highlights. None were received, and the highlights were adopted.

3. Private Sector Presentations

Pam Hersh, Director for Community Development at Princeton University, started this section of the morning's proceedings by giving the forum an overview of Princeton University's plans for their holdings on the west side of Lake Carnegie in West Windsor. The main campus sits on 500 acres of land in the Princeton. The West Windsor side is currently 340 acres and was originally 2 farm holdings acquired in 1920s and the 1940s. The holdings were acquired to prevent encroachment of buildings and industry that may injure the university in the future. The land is used mainly for recreational purposes and there are no plans to develop this land in the next 50 years. A conceptual master plan was shown to give an idea of what might be done with the land if the decision was made to develop. The plan showed a mirror campus to the one already on the Princeton side with academic and research areas, athletic fields, dormitory and some commercial area. Ms Hersh went on to say that the university asked that the land be re-zoned in the early 1970's to education and it was; none of the land is zoned commercial and the university has no desire to make it so. The university's major concern is keeping the land whole and not breaking it up in un-useable portions. They had learned over the years to conserving space wisely and keep it in useable tracts.

Bob Wolfe, General Manager for Princeton Forrestal Center, made the next presentation. Using plans of the Central Jersey region and of the Forrestal Center he started his presentation by giving a brief history of the Forrestal Center. Though the Center is mainly in Plainsboro Township it has approximately 300 acres in South Brunswick. It was born out of Princeton University's need to influence and upgrade the quality of growth that was occurring in the area in the mid 1970s. Today the Center encompasses 600 acres of open space, corporate offices, research, education, retirement housing, Princeton Forrestal Village, Courtyard by Marriott and 220 rental-housing units under construction. Mr Wolfe referred to the center has a regional plan because of its size, at its inception in the 1970s it was an award winning cluster development.

Mr Wolfe spoke of the history of traffic and transportation planning in the region. The Princeton Forrestal Center, ever since its inception and even today continues to do extensive traffic studies. In the 1970's the need for Scudders Mill Road (formerly Plainboro Bypass) and NJ 92 was projected. The Center has built on its own \$40 million (pre-inflation dollars) worth of traffic improvements. Outside of the state of New Jersey, the Center is the only corporation to contribute in a meaningful way to upgrade state highways. The Center's frontages in Plainboro Township are 6 lanes with no traffic signals and 3 grade-separated intersections.

Mr Wolfe stated that the state plan has a consensus forecast for the next 20 years of population increasing by 900,000, jobs increasing by 80,000 and households increasing by 450,000. The impact assessment in the state plan predicts that seventy four percent of this growth will go into Planning Area 2; Route 1 corridor in central New Jersey is prime Planning Area 2.

Mr Wolfe further stated that there exists a huge disconnect between the state and the region; between people who object to growth in the region; and the State Plan itself and the projected growth in the state. He said the Forum is one of the bodies that need to deal with these problems. New Jersey and the State Plan need to consciously pursue a no growth strategy; however, they need to recognize that either Planning Area 2 needs to accept a substantial amount of the projected growth or accept sprawl out in the rural areas. In deciding where growth should go we then have to address transportation needs, at what level of service and at what cost.

Walter Schmidlin, Director of Facilities at Sarnoff Corporation, spoke of his corporation's proposed development plans. He said the main portion of the existing building is 60 years old and the newest is 35 years old with a 1940's design. The existing building does not operate in a way a research center functions today. With the aid of a map Mr. Schmidlin described the property and the proposed development. The property consists of 344 acres and goes from the Amtrak line to Route 1. The plan called for expanding the existing building from 600,000 square feet to 750,000 square feet; 500,000 square feet will be added and 350,000 square feet of existing space will be demolished. In February a conceptual master plan was presented to West Windsor Planning Board with 3.5 million square feet. The planning board, township officials and neighbors gave their feedback. They were concerned about the massiveness of the project, traffic issues and environmental issues. Using current employee/area ratios build-out will be less than 5,000 employees. Sarnoff is currently re-working the plan and hopes to have a general development plan to West Windsor in May or June. They are having discussions with New Jersey Transit about bus rapid transit. Included in the revised plan is a right-of-way dedicated to bus rapid transit that may be able to tie into other transit in the area. Sarnoff anticipates 10-20 years to build-out.

Jon Edwards asked if they had given any consideration to locating what is a fairly substantial facility with 6,000 to 11,000 jobs in the city of Trenton where the infrastructure for sewer, water and traffic already exist.

Mr. Schmidlin's response was that moving off-site would be far more difficult and expensive due to the fact that there is significant investment in infrastructure and equipment in the existing building.

Marvin Reed said listening to all the three presenters illustrates why the Forum was created. He said from the three presentations, it was the Route 1 corridor study that preceded a lot of development in the area. The Route 1 corridor study concentrated on the north-south movement of vehicles on US 1, nothing he had heard during the meeting changes the primary focus of the Forum, that is east-west movement of

people. All the Stony Brook-Millstone River crossings are already congested and by 2020 many of the other roads around the region will reach the same level, and there is nothing that we have seen here today that indicates that congestion will do anything but get much worse. Speaking of the University's plan, he said that building a mirror campus on the other side of Lake Carnegie would result in added congestion on the three roadways leading into Princeton. Sarnoff's development would also aggravate the problem. It has not been demonstrated that the traffic generated by these potential developments will not add to east-west movement. There are still no plans for east-west roadways to connect the communities in the Somerset-Middlesex-Mercer area. This is a dilemma still faced by the region and he hopes the Forum will continue to address it.

Mr. Coscia commented that there is on-going growth in the region and east-west travel was one of the major problems articulated by the members of the Forum from its outset.

Peter Cantu said the problem was lack of implementation of the recommendations that were made in the US 1 corridor study and not only an east-west access problem. He went on to say that there were also delays in implementing projects that could alleviate north-south problems as well. The NJ 92 project that is 70 years in the making is still stalled, which would result in significant east-west relief. It is not adequate to address development that is taking place and still hung up on projects that could provide some improvement to east-west and Route 1 travel.

Marvin Reed, agreeing with Mr. Cantu, mentioned that some of the traffic signals on Route 1 that were earmarked for removal are still there with every indication they are going to be left there.

Mr. Cantu said even though there was full implementation of US 1 improvements in Plainsboro Township, they are still suffering traffic congestion because improvements to the south of Plainsboro have not taken place and traffic backs up into the township.

4. Land-Use/Transit Scenario

Rosemarie Anderson, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, gave a review of the November workshop. She reiterated the purpose of the workshop – obtaining input from stakeholders for preparing a land-use/transit scenario for testing, using the NJDOT's statewide model. Potential locations for new and expanded transit service and development centers were identified. The ultimate purpose of the land-use/transit scenario was to show the effects of proposed land-use changes and potential transit strategies on future travel conditions.

Stanley Platt, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, gave an over-view of the scenario building process. With the aid of a chart Mr. Platt took the Forum members

present through the process that would end in a report to the Forum on what is the potential impact of transit rider-ship and land-use changes on the highway system. New Jersey Transit looked at what was proposed from the charrette added a sense of reality on the ground and transformed it into a conceptual project proposal. They then worked with the Regional Planning Partnership to define what land-use changes are needed to support transit. The modeling process consists of 3 stages – determine travel times using the new demographics; determine modal split, and run the highway model with revised demographics and transit network.

Tom Marchwinski, Director of Systems Planning, New Jersey Transit then presented the transit scenario. He informed the Forum that he translated the results from the charrette into a more defined alternative. However, no detailed engineering has gone into the scenario building, it was purely conceptual; aerial photographs were examined along with the staff at the Regional Planning Partnership. Mr. Marchwinski, with the aid of two maps, one showed the bus lines and the other showed fixed guide-ways, explained to the group what he had done. Eighty to ninety percent of what came out of the charrette was included in some form or other in the assumptions. There were 3 types of projects – regional commuter rail, additional local bus service enhancements including extended routes, and new fixed guide-way system with related bus priority treatment. He then elaborated on each project: the status of commuter rail projects; the alignment, length, speeds, travel times and fare structure of the fixed guide-way system; and improved frequency of existing bus service, park and ride facilities, and queue jumps for buses. He then presented Travel Demand Management Strategies that could increase the transit/non-SOV vehicle mode shares. He said there were 90,000 jobs in the vicinity of the proposed light rail alignment (this was 2 times the number of jobs in Newark) and he assumed that 50% of the employers would offer transit subsidy or parking cash-out. A flexible van-pool route system could be introduced – New Jersey Transit subsidizes van pools to the tune of \$300-500 per month.

Mr. Marchwinski said his next steps are to develop mode choice estimates based on the MPOs travel demand models; estimate non-transit trip reduction based on changes in land-use patterns and TDM strategies; incorporate in statewide model to analyze impact of reduction of highway congestion and refine transit operating plan and develop baseline transit operating cost estimates.

Peter Cantu said he was concerned that the TDM strategies assumptions built into the model maybe unrealistic; assuming 50% of the employers charge for parking is overly optimistic; especially when there are not existing parking charges.

John Coscia asked whether the modelers would be doing a sensitivity analysis for each of the variables; that will tell what impact the parking change assumption would have. Mr. Marchwinski said no sensitivity analysis would be conducted; he could give an order of magnitude estimate of what it might do.

Mr. Cantu said fifty percent is high and he is concerned that the model not be built on assumptions that cannot be achieved.

Marvin Reed said that public officials should not approve general development plans on the assumptions that transportation improvements are going to happen until they know they are going to happen. If they are not cautious they will get the development and not the transit improvements. Referring to the NJ Transit maps he said the transit network is good at connecting the employment centers to each other but not the employment centers to residential centers. Therefore, how will commuter congestion be relieved?

Mr. Marchwinski said one solution was feeder buses serving the light rail and Amtrak lines.

Stanley Platt said one of the things not shown was the build-up of the proposed centers.

Bill Beetle urged the forum to look at both maps in unison to get a complete picture and they must be cognizant of what travel is being met by what proposal.

William Feldman said that the group should understand that there has to be high quality pedestrian and bike access at both ends of the network and they should not be an after thought after the transit facilities and feeder buses have been put in. He said there should also be facilities for bicycle parking at the proposed park and rides.

Jon Edwards commented on the need for additional bus enhancements that would adapt more to the current east-west traffic needs in the region.

Mr. Marchwinski said there would not be much of a problem to add some additional buses or shift some lines to address the problems.

Mr. Coscia encouraged input and comments from the people familiar with the area but cautioned that comments would be needed immediately if they were to be included in the model.

Pam Mount said that Lawrence Township was embarking on tremendous redevelopment and the proposed light rail line could serve this area. It would also help to extend the line into Trenton from where the majority of the current bus rider-ship in the Route 1 corridor comes from.

5. Millstone By-Pass EIS

Mr Coscia stated that this was an information item, to keep the Forum apprised of the Millstone By-Pass project.

Andy Fekete, New Jersey Department of Transportation, was the lead presenter on this item. He said the name of the project has been changed to the Penns Neck Area EIS. NJDOT is taking a fresh look at the situation, taking the opportunity to try new things and doing an EIS in a way that is fully participatory. All the stakeholders will have an

opportunity to be part of the process. The EIS will not just look at the Route 1 problem but also at east-west traffic, no build and all feasible alternatives in the area regarding transportation and mobility. The National Environmental Policy Act requires that when a project is undertaken that will cause significant environmental impacts an analysis of those impacts must be done, the impacts must be disclose them to the public, no build and all reasonable alternatives must be developed and analyzed, send it out for comment and analysis; and use that process to pick a preferred alternative that will be presented in the final EIS.

He then referred to the handouts showing the general EIS process. It starts out with a scoping process – listening to issues, suggestions and ideas from the stakeholders. The impact analysis will be a full public process after which a draft EIS is produced which shows a summary of all alternatives. Mr. Fekete stated that by the time they come to the public hearing he is hoping to have an handle on where everyone stand and it would be only a pre-functionary process. The next step would be to select a preferred alternative and perform any required additional technical work. The process is expected to take two years. Involved in the process are Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute and Center for Conflict Resolution; F.R. Harris Consultants; NJDOT; FHWA owner of the EIS process and the Forum. The Forum will be heavily involved due to its stakeholders. The consultant team will begin the traffic analysis by looking at traffic work done by the Forum. He said he wanted it to be a clear, transparent, logical, open and integrated process.

Martin Robbins, the Director of the Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute, explained the approach the Rutgers team will be taking in the Penns Neck Area EIS. He said the name change was significant.

In discussing the structure and timeline of the project, he started off by saying the assignment will serve as a model for future public participation and conflict resolution in transportation disputes. The process will be in three phases – scoping and alternatives which is identification and screening; draft environmental impact analysis which involves the completion of preliminary analysis and screening of mobility strategies; and final environmental impact statement document. These three phases will require four distinct types of skills – public involvement; land use/transportation policy and planning; knowledge of EIS procedures; negotiations and conflict resolution. The corridor has been marked by considerable amount of dispute over the last several years; therefore each skill is essential to the EIS.

Mr. Robbins said their initial task is to approach the various issues with neutrality and objectivity with no pre-conceived notions about the outcomes and to illicit help from the informed stakeholders in the area in defining the problems and identifying a list of possible solutions. Defining the problem is very important for the start of the project. He said he recognized that the traffic issues are related to a much larger regional context related to highway oriented development, increase vehicle movement and limitation of existing transportation infrastructure. He promised he would report to the Forum periodically on the EIS progress and monitor closely Forum-related work and coordinate where appropriate. The central part of the public outreach is a round-table – that will

begin development of the problem statement and alternatives identified for further study.

Helen Neuhaus, Helen Neuhaus and Associates, Inc., addressed the gathering next about her role in the EIS process. She started by informing the group that her job was to make sure that every aspect of the project development from scoping to preparation of a comprehensive EIS is done in collaboration with the many people who have interest and concerns about the project. She asked the Forum to work with her group to develop concepts and possible solutions to the difficult problems that must be addressed in scoping and working toward consensus on the project. The public involvement process will be thorough, open, flexible and all-inclusive.

In the next few weeks her group would be getting in contact with 75 groups and individuals to be interviewed. Everyone on the mailing list will be kept informed through a monthly newsletter; expected first issue will be in June at which time the web-site should be up and running. The round table advisory committee will meet on a bi-weekly basis starting late May/early June and will be facilitated by the Center for Negotiations and Conflict Resolution. There will also be many public forums in the future.

In the question and answer session that followed, Jon Carnegie of the Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute further elaborated on the process. He stated that it was a flexible, two-year process. The first 6 months will be a primarily listening, getting the issues on the table, looking at alternatives and solutions that stakeholders want investigated. The alternatives will be placed in groups and further investigated. Over the next 6 months, further whittling down of the alternatives will take place, coming up with a reasonable set of alternatives to do more detailed analysis on. The process will then move on to the next phase which should take 6 months and will include the draft EIS and conducting public hearing on the document, finally necessary changes will be made and complete the final EIS.

Mr. Carnegie was asked whether the Sunshine laws would be observed and if the public will be allowed to observe the round-table. He responded saying that exact details will have to be worked out.

Phyllis Marchand rounded out the discussions stating that she hoped that the project is one we can point to with pride when it is all finished and she looked forward to being a part of the process.

6. Next Steps

The next meeting will be held on August 1, 2000 where the results of the land use/transit scenario results will be presented.

Attachments