

DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Highlights of the Central New Jersey Transportation Forum Meeting of September 7, 2001

Attendees (79):

Name	Organization
Jacqueline Alberts	West Windsor Township
Chris Altomari	Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association
Rosemarie Anderson	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Nicholas Angarone	Monmouth County Planning
Karen Ayres	Trenton Times
William Beetle	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Wendy Benchley	Princeton Borough Council
Peter Bilton	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Dianne Brake	The Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
Sandra Brillhart	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Robert Bzik	Somerset County Planning Board
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)
Jerry Cureton	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Thomas Dallessio	Office of the Governor – New Jersey
Stephen Dexter	West Windsor Township
Elizabeth Donahue	Sarnoff Corporation
Jon Edwards	Hopewell Township
Meghan Fehlig	Princeton University Student
Andy Fekete	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
George Fries	West Windsor Township
Amy Fox	Federal Highway Administration
Michael Fuhrman	Michael Baker Corporation
Tony Gambilonghi	Middlesex County Planning
Constance Greiff	Rocky Hill Planning Board
Robert Grimm	New Jersey Turnpike Authority
Heejoo Ham	URS Corporation
Larry Hanover	Trenton Times
Bruce Henry	Mercer County Engineering
Jim Hess	The Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)

David Hojsak	New Jersey Office of State Planning
Jennifer Jaroski	Tri-State Campaign
Jack Kanarek	New Jersey Transit
Peggy Killmer	Regional Citizens Committee, DVRPC
John Kovar	DMJM & Harris
Joe Kowalski	Hopewell Township Mayor's Task Force of Traffic & Trucking
Steve Kukan	Advance Realty
Walter Lane	Somerset County
Matt Ledger	New Jersey Transit
Donna Lewis	Mercer County Planning
Andrea Lubin	Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute
Dean Lundahl	Advance Realty Group
Thomas Marchwinski	New Jersey Transit
Craig Marshall	South Brunswick Township Planning Board
Paula McGuire	West Windsor Transportation Alternatives
Allison Miller	West Windsor Township
Kendall Miller	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Diane Murphy-Atkins	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Dan Nolan	Bristol-Myers Squibb
Jules Oroszvary	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
George Padgett	Hopewell Borough
Tushar Patel	URS Corporation
Anita Perez	Ridewise of Raritan Valley
Jim Pivovar	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Stanley Platt	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Pete Rayner	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Marvin Reed	Princeton Borough
Ron Reinhardt	Transit Center
Martin Robins	Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute
Tony Sabidussi	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
David Schellinger	URS Corporation
James J. Schwarzwald	New Jersey Transit
Charles Scott	NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection – Historic Preservation
Don Shanis	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Herb Simmens	New Jersey Office of State Planning
Larry Smith	Dresdner Robin
Lee Solow	Princeton Regional Planning Board
Linda Spalinski	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Peter Tolischus	Heyer, Gruel & Talley, PA - Monroe Township Planning
Paul Truban	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Paul VanGelder	Clough, Harbour & Associates
George Ververides	Middlesex County Planning
Matthew Watkins	South Brunswick Township

Kenneth Wedeen
Bob Wolfe
Tom Wright

Somerset County Planning Department
Princeton Forrestal Center
New Jersey Office of State Planning

The meeting of the Central Jersey Transportation Forum took place September 7, 2001 at Sarnoff Corporation in Princeton, NJ. Mike Baltes and Joel Rey, Research Associates at the Transportation Center of the University of South Florida and W. Alton Jones Foundation gave a presentation on Bus Rapid Transit. The results of the land-use/transit modeling scenario was presented to the group by NJDOT's consultant, URS Corporation. The Forum was brought up to date on the progress of the Penns Neck Area Environmental Impact Statement. The meeting concluded with discussions on the next steps for the Forum and conclusion of the modeling process.

1. Introduction of Attendees and Two Minute Reports

John Coscia, Executive Director of DVRPC, welcomed guests and told everyone that they would be given the opportunity to introduce themselves and highlight any major activity that occurred since the last meeting. Introduction and two-minute reports followed. Jon Edwards noted that since the truck ban heavy truck traffic on NJ 31 is down more than 35 percent. Hopewell is trying to get permits to inspect trucks on local roads and are ascertaining the correct protocol regarding the stopping of trucks as there is the issue of probable cause to consider. Marvin Reed noted that the borough council had approved a redevelopment plan for downtown Princeton consistent with the New Jersey State Plan on concentrated development. A parking garage will be constructed, along with a new public plaza next to the library. There will be housing units, and retail space including a food market. Robert Bzik informed the Forum that Franklin Township was in its final phase of a feasibility study of extending Davidson Avenue to connect with the proposed Middlebush Bypass. This would expedite east-west traffic movement through the county. George Ververides pointed out that the county in association with the Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc. has produced a countywide bicycle map. The county is looking at several of their corridors with regards to growth management. They are working with the Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute to develop the New Brunswick/Piscataway Corridor Study.

2 Summary of the September Meeting's Highlights

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

3 Land-Use/Transit Scenario

The results of the land-use/transit scenario were presented. Stanley Platt, DVRPC staff, gave a brief overview of the process of developing the results of the scenario. He told the group that the scenario started with the charrette in November, 2000. At the charrette participants identified locations of proposed centers, proposed light rail transit (LRT) line, enhanced local bus service and recommended for travel demand management (TDM) strategies. The recommendations were refined by the project team, a focused transit model was developed and the highway model was then run interactively with the transit, TDM and land-use models.

Tom Marchwiniski, Director of Planning at NJ Transit, presented transit and land use assumptions and results of the transit portion of the modeling process. The scenario started by assuming a "transit focused" development pattern consisting of mixed-use development. This land use pattern is expected to lead to a reduction of vehicle trips due to the proximity of trip generators. Another key assumption was "transit focused" centers consist of a mix of land uses including residential developments; a grid pattern with rear parking and focused pedestrian paths; one housing unit for every 8 jobs; employment located 8-10 minutes walking distance; and 3-4 minutes average walk time from transit station and majority of the parking in structures. For the scenario, regional household and employment were held constant but there was shifting of 26,000 jobs and 2,600 housing units to towns along the Route 1 corridor where enhanced transit services are proposed. Tables displayed as part of the presentation showed employment growth in the Route 1 corridor will grow by 10 percent and households will grow by 3.9 percent whereas the corresponding percentages for the West Trenton corridor declined by 10.8 and 3.0. He said NJ Transit and URS developed transit ridership estimates and projected vehicle trip patterns using the Forum's assumptions about transit services. Estimates were made for both peak and off peak periods due to the differences in travel time for each time period. Transit model factors include projected transit travel times, service frequency, required transfers, fares, auto parking fees and center based land use patterns. DVRPC's model land use factor was modified where appropriate to reflect transit/land-use scenario development patterns. He said the scenario assumed a \$1.50 per day parking fee in zones near proposed LRT stations; a parking "cash out" program at all employment sites for carpools and vanpools in zones with parking fees; and priority parking at development sites for carpools and vanpools.

Mr. Marchwiniski presented the transit forecasting results from the modeling. The results showed that 15,500 new transit trips would be generated in the study area. The peak period mode share for the markets that the LRT alignment served would be 7.2 percent whereas off-peak mode share would be 2.1 percent. Proposed LRT falls below the minimum peak hour and peak period ridership thresholds for to support LRT. He explained that there was modest bus ridership numbers from feeder services in Plainsboro and East Windsor and mixed results for other bus transit feeder services. Transit ridership estimates depended substantially on land use patterns - mixed-use

pattern with development intensity. Without the TDM strategy of instituting a parking fee at employment sites, transit ridership estimated reduction is 15 percent. Without changes in land-use - intensity, mix and design, transit ridership is reduced by 50-60 percent.

Summarizing the results of the transit and land use modeling, Mr. Marchwinski said that without changes in existing land use patterns, design and intensity potential for fixed guide-way investment in the study area is minimal; Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) with a combined segment with BRT and LRT may prove to be a more viable alternative given its lower capital costs and ability to serve more diverse markets.

Tushar Patel of URS Corporation presented the effects of proposed changes in land use and transit on 2020 traffic conditions. He started his presentation by going over the assumptions – same demographics regional total with local changes; a center oriented pattern for land use; existing transit network and proposed LRT with improved bus and shuttle service; the same highway network as the 2020 “Do Nothing” scenario (1997 network with recently completed or projects under construction in the area). His analysis showed that growth in auto trips were reduced by 7.9 percent in peak and 5.5 percent in off peak between 1997 and 2020. He said trip reductions based upon reallocation of growth constitutes 65 percent of all reductions whereas the transit change was 24 percent and TDM measures contributed 11 percent. Whereas total vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) in the study area would be reduced by 2 percent from the 2020 “Do Nothing” scenario; VMT on collector/local roads would be reduced by 5.3 percent. This is a result of the location of growth centers on major corridors therefore traffic would be concentrated in these areas. Vehicle-hours-traveled (VHT) in the region would be reduced by 2.1 percent but on collector/local roads it would be down by 6.7 percent.

In summary Mr Patel told the group that two-thirds of the reduction in auto-trips was directly related to center oriented development pattern; trip reduction in peak periods was significantly higher than off-peak due to higher usage of transit and carpools in peak periods; though the scenario reduces congested VMT by 14 percent significant congestion will remain within the region; travel times on local roads will improve while roads near major development centers will experience more congestion; and there were no major improvements on overall screen-line volume-to-capacity (v/c) ratios.

Following the presentations, an open discussion followed.

John Coscia noted that the final scenario must consider both transit and highway improvements.

Peggy Kilmmer said the study was based on the problem of traffic congestion but the problem the Forum should be addressing was auto-dependency; how to get the poor

from Trenton to jobs in Route 1. She further said the problem was moving the young, the poor and the elderly and time was being wasted looking at the wrong issues, racial and social justice were factors that needs to be considered.

John Coscia, in response stated that these factors were beyond the scope of the model being used and a follow up study were needed to address these issues.

Dianne Brake said the model does address congestion but is not exclusive of auto-dependence. She pointed out that the small shift of land use relates to a small shift in transit and that the extent to which land use is shifted will determine the extent of the shift for transit use for the 20 year horizon.

Jacqueline Alberts said that one of the assumptions for the scenario was adding population to West Windsor and this was not going to happen unless funds were transferred to the township to support this increase.

Peter Cantu said the assumptions need to be examined; though they are modest they are difficult to achieve. They can go well beyond realistic regarding land use and transit demand.

Tom Marchwinski said in time municipalities should want to institute growth-oriented policy to maximize transit investment.

John Coscia said a more in-depth study was needed. He asked Tom if they had tried running the model in reverse by first putting in the results they wanted to achieve.

Tom said they had not. He said he had worked in conjunction with the Regional Planning Partnership to build the assumptions and it was possible to run the scenario spreading the density.

Jon Edwards said there is not enough water or sewer services in Mercer County to support the study assumptions. He said it was obvious this plan could never happen.

John Coscia replied that in his experience these infrastructure elements usually come along and noted that DVRPC had the same issue in South Jersey and the utilities found a way to handle it.

Pete Rayner asked what TDM measures were included in the study.

In reply, Tom Marchwinski said parking fees, parking cash out, priority parking for carpools and vanpools.

Chris Altomari said most of the results from the study would potentially lead to a windfall for developers, therefore developers should be subsidizing the light rail in the region.

John Coscia replied that what was included in the model was determined by the Forum at the charrette. He said what was presented was one of the last scenarios, there was one more left. He said environmental justice and air quality could not be addressed in the current model and a more detailed study had to be undertaken to address these issues.

Peter Cantu said that the study does not include allocation of capital costs. The Forum needs to be realistic in what it proposes.

Alison Miller said light rail may not be realistic but the Forum needs to take a closer look at BRT; extending BRT system to other towns that want or have higher density in their existing centers. She pointed out that West Windsor was looking into bus service from Washington Township to Route 1 corridor via Mercer County College. She said that the weakness in the scenario was linkages. Major generators need to be linked; where people live need to be linked to where they work and if that is done then the transit scores may be achieved.

4. Presentation on Bus Rapid Transit

Michael Baltés and Joel Rey, Senior Research Associates, Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of Southern Florida and W. Alton Jones Foundation, gave a presentation on BRT. They started off their presentation by making reference to the work that the University of California at Berkeley together with the Federal Transit Administration in promoting the concept of BRT. They said that the Center for Urban Transportation Research was a non-profit think tank and the W. Alton Jones Foundation was sponsoring their work on BRT.

They informed the Forum that BRT is a more attractive, sexier mode of transit than traditional bus service and it is not just for the poor with no alternative means of transportation. The presenters indicated that the focus should be on the rider as a customer and not as a transit user. They presented the characteristics of BRT and its potential as a premium service. Worldwide examples of BRT use were given. A chart was shown comparing different characteristics of BRT and LRT. In summary they told the Forum that BRT was environmentally friendly, more flexible than fixed guide-way modes with potentially the same premium service (higher speeds, fare payment off vehicle, state of the art station and vehicles and ITS capability).

During the open discussions that followed the presentation, Wendy Benchley said they tried to institute jitney service in Princeton but the vehicles ran on diesel fuel. She requested that NJ Transit consider fuel systems other than diesel.

Bob Wolfe asked, how much travel time was saved by instituting BRT on the Miami/South Dade bus way.

Michael Baltes and Joel Rey replied that actual savings were 2 or 3 minutes per ride. While the time saved wasn't significant, the perception from the riders was that the savings were higher because they could relax on the bus instead of driving a vehicle in traffic.

They were asked given that the examples in their presentation showed areas of relatively high density if there were examples of BRT application in areas like Central New Jersey that have a more dispersed population.

They said, in reply, 200 individual communities are presently looking at BRT. Therefore, they would think that areas like central New Jersey would be among them but none came to mind.

It was pointed out to the Forum by an attendee that in Charlotte, North Carolina where they were instituting BRT, the planning for transit was heavily integrated with the land use planning in the region.

Alison Miller said that West Windsor Planning Board after reviewing traffic projections from their consultants has endorsed the BRT concept on the Route 1 corridor. She went on to say that West Windsor does not advocate increasing density to increase transit ridership.

Asked whether the current scenario supports BRT, Tom Marchwinski replied that given the growth in the area, BRT was a more viable solution. It has a chance of working because of a lower capital cost and level of development in the area. LRT has a fixed alignment, and the development density has to be near the station. For multi-center suburban areas, BRT is more conducive. Therefore he thinks BRT has potential for the Central Jersey region.

Mike Baltes also pointed out that another benefit to having a dedicated right of way for buses is that emergency vehicles would be able to use the right of way instead of getting stuck in traffic during an emergency.

5. Penns Area EIS Update

Martin Robins gave an update on the Penns Neck Area Environmental Statement process. He said that they had conducted interviews with approximately 80 people and interested parties. The geographic area for the study was not yet fully defined but it starts in the vicinity of the Millstone River to the Alexander Road bridge and extends

into Princeton. He said the EIS roundtable started in June; four meetings have been held so far and the membership was approximately 35 people representing different organizations. The roundtable had been dealing with the Problem Statement and identifying the goal and objectives. He said the roundtable would then move on to actions and strategies to address the goals and objectives. The Central Jersey Transportation Forum would be making a presentation at the roundtable meeting in an effort to tie the planning work of the Forum with what is being accomplished during the EIS process. The Penns Neck EIS now has its website up and running – www.pennsneckareaeis.com

6. Next Steps

In discussing the next steps Don Shanis told the group that the final scenario would be completed and an action plan would be drawn up. The five original issues would be reviewed and specific actions formulated. The group would then take this and make into a plan. Cost, staging, roles, responsibility, and priorities will be determined and a policy statement will be drawn up. It would be a plan the region can be built on; a vision statement.

When asked if the final scenario would include BRT, Tom Marchwinski answered no; if BRT is included in the scenario then the turn around time would be much longer and modeling costs much higher. It would be more advantageous to study BRT in a new effort.

Mr. Coscia said studying BRT could be an action item that comes out of this process. Marvin Reed said that municipalities were now doing their master plans, therefore having the results of the next scenario sooner rather than later was in the best interest of that planning process.

A discussion then ensued in which Peggy Killmer was vehemently opposed to having the last scenario done as described.

William Beetle said having the last scenario done as described would help to drive the discussions for the action plan.

A consensus was reached, the last scenario would model the same assumptions as the land use/transit scenario except Highway II roadway network will be used. The results will be presented at the next Forum meeting and a draft action plan.

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday, November 16, 2001.

