

DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Highlights of the Central New Jersey Transportation Forum Meeting of February 21, 2003

Attendees (80):

Name	Organization
Bruce Ahern	Michael Baker Jr., Incorporated
Chris Altomari	Stony Brook – Millstone Watershed Association
Rosemarie Anderson	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
John Araneo	French and Parrello Associates, P.A.
Brent Barnes	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Wendy Benchley	Princeton Borough Council
Richard Bickel	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Peter Bilton	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Dianne Brake	Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
Mike Brimmer	CSX
David Campbell	Princeton Packet
Janet Campbell-Lorenc	SYSTRA
Peter A. Cantu	Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc., Plainsboro Township
Jon Carnegie	Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute
Nancy Ciaruffoli	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Paul Cohn	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Willie J. Colquitt	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Susan Conlon	Princeton Junction Communities
John Coscia	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
James Crane	Ridewise of Raritan
Talvin Davis	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Stephen Decter	West Windsor Township
Elizabeth Donahue	Lawrence Township
Cay Dufau	Middlesex County Transportation Coordinating Council
Jon Edwards	Hopewell Township
Bill Enslin	Princeton Township
Emi Faloughi	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Leslie Floyd	Mercer County Planning
Doug Freudenrich	Michael Baker Jr., Incorporated
Katherine Fullerton	Washington Township Planning
Victor Furmanec	Dresdner Robin
Hamid Ghadimy	New Jersey Turnpike
Basil Giletto	Mercer County Chamber of Commerce
Pam Hersh	Princeton University
Jim Hess	Regional Planning Partnership, Inc. (RPP)
Shing Fu Hsueh	West Windsor Township

Teri Jover	New Jersey Future
Jack Kanarek	New Jersey Transit
Dennis Keck	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Matt Ledger	New Jersey Transit
Donna Lewis	Mercer County
Andy Link	Lawrence Township
Bruce Looloian	Advance Realty
Bradford Lyon	Hopewell Borough
Phyllis Marchand	Princeton Township
Craig Marshall	South Brunswick Township Planning Board
Anthony McCracken	Somerset County Planning
Maura McManimon	New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
Alison Miller	West Windsor Township
Jack Molenaar	Plainsboro Township
Diane Murphy-Atkins	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Kevin O'Donnell	Dewberry-Goodkind, Inc.
Carmen Orta	Federal Transit Administration
David Parris	Penns Neck
Stanley Platt	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Pete Rayner	Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association
Marvin Reed	Princeton Borough
Ron Reinhardt	Transit Center
James Requa	New Jersey Office of Smart Growth
Marshall Robert	Michael Baker Jr., Incorporated
Madelyn Rumowicz	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Howard Rosen	CANAC, Inc
Jenny Ruth	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Anthony Sabidussi	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Roger Sager	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Walter Schmidlin	Sarnoff Corporation
James Schwarzwald	New Jersey Transit
Charles Scott	New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Don Shanis	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Ruby Siegel	SYSTRA
Lee Solow	Princeton Regional Planning Board
Jenn Stuart	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
Ron Tindall	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)
Jim Twomey	Michael Baker Jr., Incorporated
Paul Truban	New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
George Ververides	Middlesex County Planning
Herman Volk	New Jersey Office of Smart Growth
Pete Weale	Penns Neck
Louise Wilson	Montgomery Township
Bob Wolfe	Princeton Forrestal Center

The meeting of the Central Jersey Transportation Forum took place on Friday, February 21, 2003 at Sarnoff Corporation in Princeton, NJ. The Forum adopted Regional Planning Proposal and TDR Consensus points prepared by the legislative committee. Mike Brimmer, CSX presented perspectives of rail freight in the region. New Jersey Future and New Jersey Office of Smart Growth presented smart growth initiatives being undertaken at the agencies. Updates were presented on the BRT committee, Penns Neck EIS and US 1 widening in South Brunswick. The meeting concluded with Mr. Coscia announcing the next meeting date, Friday May 16, 2003.

John Coscia, Executive Director of DVRPC, called the meeting to order. He welcomed attendees and introduced Dennis Keck, Assistant Commissioner, NJDOT to the group as co-chair of the meeting. He reminded the gathering that their participation was an integral component of the discussions.

Summary of the August Meeting's Highlights

Mr. Coscia asked for amendments to the highlights of the December 5, 2002 Forum meeting. The motion was carried to approve the highlights as written.

Legislative Committee Proposal

Bob Wolfe, Chairman of Legislative Committee told the forum in answer to Governor McGreevey's challenge to establish a statewide model on how to integrate smart growth principles into regional planning framework, the committee has devised a viable mechanism. The three-page proposal for enhanced regional planning was presented to the Forum. The group was informed that the three pages constituted a highly distilled summary of a complicated topic. A six-step process was suggested that allowed the integration of land use and infrastructure planning within the physical environment. The final product of this process would be a Regional Action Plan (RAP) for each county. The process would be dependent on several factors that include, strengthening the counties' roles without sacrificing municipal sovereignty, making full use of existing resources, and conducting pro-active planning at the municipal level.

Mr. Wolfe said he believed the Governor would be presenting a proposal on the topic in the next week, therefore for the Forum to impact this discussion, the conceptual proposal had to be endorsed by members of the Forum at this meeting, allowing the legislative committee to move swiftly in submitting the proposal to the Governor.

John Coscia said that the proposal had to more clearly state the need to strengthen counties roles in the RAP process, as they are the keystones to bringing municipalities on board. He said that counties had to review all development plans to provide the process with consistency.

Pam Hersh, Princeton University said that the proposal was the best way forward within current regulatory confines. However, a case study of the RAP process in action would be helpful.

Marvin Reed, Mayor, Princeton Borough said that the RAP model was probably happening in areas where inter-municipal planning is present. This process should offer the opportunity for municipalities to develop compacts across county boundaries in which counties have some governance. In addition to environmental permitting, proposal should highlight strengthening transportation permitting to limit highway access. County and NJDOT permitting processes need to be strengthened.

Dennis Keck, NJDOT agreed with the need to strengthen the permitting process at NJDOT across all fronts. He said NJDOT is currently looking to strengthen access codes in both the long term and short term. At present the agency does not have the legal authority to restrict private property owner access; but an open honest look at the problem is being taken.

Peter Cantu, Mayor, Plainsboro Township agreed that access codes needed improving. He cautioned that there is a fine line in improving access code; some proposals go beyond to planning responsibilities. One has to be careful how recommendations are taken and how far they go. In the RAP proposal he said cooperation between municipalities can be done within the counties; more success can be achieved with the county that forming new regional areas.

Mr. Coscia added that at present DVRPC made funds available to counties for inter-county planning work. However, the decision to hire planners is made by county freeholders. Even though the money is available, many have instituted hiring freezes that prevent county planning officials from hiring planners.

Diane Brake, Regional Planning Partnership said enabling legislation is expected to facilitate the RAP process that would allow counties to hire planners.

Jack Moleenar, Plainsboro Township said the RAP is trying to work towards strengthening the existing system. Incentives and disincentives were seen as a far more effective method of bringing municipalities on board with the regional process.

Mr. Coscia put forth a motion to submit the RAP proposal to the Governor with changes and refinements per discussion. The motion was passed.

Peter Cantu brought the group up-to date on the progress of the legislative committee work on Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). He said considerable work has been done to develop consensus points to get traditional opponents of TDR such as the Builders and Farm Bureau on board with the process. Several meetings had been held between these entities and members of the Forum's Legislative Committee. Outreach was made to the Farm Bureau, Secretary of Agriculture and his staff, NJ League of Municipalities and

Burlington County. The outcome is not specific legislation but a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between all parties outlining key TDR consensus points. Work is ongoing at the state level to advance TDR legislation. For the Forum to impact this process the MOU needs to be endorsed and the next step taken; getting it into the hands of the appropriate people to be included in TDR legislation.

Stephen Decter, West Windsor said the bank concept is important to the TDR process. It was hampered in the past by a timing mismatch between landowners wanting to sell land and developers looking to buy land. Timing is key to the TDR process. The process will also allow municipalities to implement TDR's individually. However, decisions about ultimate responsibility for oversight of the process is still in flux.

The motion to endorse the Memorandum of Understanding on TDR consensus points was passed.

Perspective of Rail Freight in Central Jersey

Mike Brimmer, CSX presented to the Forum how greater use of rail to move freight along I-95 corridor might help to reduce congestion in the region. He reviewed the nature and operation of the current rail system through the region stating that there are 3 major rail lines between Philadelphia and North Jersey; two are freight lines and one mainly passenger rail with limited freight. He said each rail car on a freight train carries the equivalent of three tractor-trailers; an average train of 100 cars takes the equivalent of 600 trucks off local roads. The challenge he states is to be able to offer the type of service that entices shippers to use rail rather than trucks. It has to be reliable and cost effective. There are impediments that reduce transit times and reliability and add to operating cost. To overcome this, private railroads are investing in new capacity on their own where it is financially justified by clear demand from existing or new customers. They are working with Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) and NJDOT to share the cost of capacity improvements in northern New Jersey to accommodate projected future growth at the Port and some new passenger proposals. There is working being done in conjunction with other state DOTs to encourage Congress to provide new funding mechanisms for interstate transportation corridors such as along I-95 in the Mid-Atlantic states. Mr. Brimmer encouraged the Forum to continue to support DVRPC and NJTPA in pending efforts to increase capacity by raising clearances on lines between Philadelphia and Trenton; support pending efforts by PANYNJ and New Jersey to share the cost of additional rail freight capacity in and around Port Newark and Elizabeth; support work of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission charged with developing a comprehensive rail plan; and continue to act locally but think regionally by urging elected officials to support multi-state multi-modal corridor improvements in the pending reauthorization of TEA-3. Mr. Brimmer concluded his presentation by informing the group that in-order for the rail freight system to successfully attract freight transportation away from trucks on local highways the overall corridor to, from and through the entire region has to be improved.

Diane Brake proposed setting up a sub-committee to address rail freight issues.

Mr. Brimmer replied that work was already being done by PANYNJ and NJDOT.

Donna Lewis, Mercer County Planning said an important role for this committee would be to get public support for rail and freight projects. This transport choice is not as visible in the public eye and in fact people, especially those close to rail tracks may be adverse to increases in train traffic because of the potential of noise pollution.

Mike Brimmer mentioned that most tracks and adjacent right-of-way (ROW) is privately owned. There is adequate ROW to add track without land acquisition and EIS. In addition, increasing capacity on train does not necessarily involve increasing the number of trains. More cars can be attached to current trains and where possible containers can be double stacked.

Pam Hersh added that rail freight has to be included as part of an overall strategy to eliminate truck traffic and should include zoning and warehousing. She would also like to see stricter enforcement against trucks using local roads to avoid paying Turnpike fees.

Don Shanis called attention to the importance of looking at the impact on jobs and development potential when examining freight lines.

Louise Wilson, Mayor, Montgomery Township said whereas she supported increase use of rail for freight and passenger there were a number of at grade crossings along the West Trenton Line which result in tremendous noise pollution from passing trains, this poses a problem for many in her community.

Mr. Coscia suggested Dennis Keck chair the Rail Freight sub-committee. Those that wanted to participate in the sub-committee were encouraged to submit their names

Growing Smarter

Smart Growth Project Consistency Checklist

James Requa, Office of Smart Growth presented "Smart Growth Project Consistency Checklist" which was developed by the NJ Smart Growth Council/Office of Smart Growth. It is an internal agency first cut/ first review guide that allows project managers to judge if an infrastructure projects follows smart growth guidelines. There are thirteen smart growth consistency criteria by which a project is judged and the answers can be in the form of yes, no, not applicable or exceptions. Criteria include land use practices, transportation choices, range of housing choices, redevelopment and environmental conditions.

George Ververides, Middlesex County Planning asked what relation the document had to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP).

Mr. Requa said it was in fact linked and aligned with the SDRP. He said it was an internal guide for state agencies project managers. Project managers use it to take a closer look at their projects at the outset.

Mr. Ververides commented it was a duplication of effort considering the process used by the MPOs to establish their programs.

Mr. Coscia said the TIP scoring ranked projects. The MPOs work closely with NJ Department of Community Affairs and the Office of Smart Growth. He said the checklist was a weak first attempt, it needs to be strengthened as a decision making tool for projects. He commented that two major tenets of Smart Growth, site design and location, did not appear on the list.

Mr. Cantu said the checklist functioned as a review of infrastructure projects not a development project checklist. However, he feared that acceptance or denial of projects based on this list at the state level overrode municipal authority where the same projects may have been approved based on current standards.

Brent Barnes, NJDOT said there is not a lot of clarity. The checklist is a cost saving device; it is only used as a way to screen project in concept design.

Alison Miller, West Windsor Council pointed out that the checklist's answers were framed in positive terms and not negative. Negative impacts from a proposed project on existing environment are not accounted for on the list.

Ms. Brake said connecting urban centers were not taken into account on the list.

Ms. Lewis said the checklist is intended for state evaluation of state sponsored projects, not to evaluate permitting. This would be done before project get to TIP.

Ms. Wilson said she was pleased that NJDOT staff were grappling with all these questions and concepts but would like to see negative criteria added to the checklist.

Ms. Hersh thought that it would be beneficial to have additional text explaining how and for what projects this checklist should be used.

Mr. Ververides said OSG should work more closely with the municipalities and the counties not only on the checklist but also on the "Big Map"

Mr. Moleenar said additional definitions were needed. For example, how was an "Urban Center" defined for the purposes of this checklist?

Smart Growth Score Card

Teri Jover, NJ Future presented to the Forum how to use NJ Future's Smart Growth Scorecards. She said the scorecards were intended to evaluate smart growth projects and

planning at the local level; it is designed for a broad audience – citizens, builders, government officials; accessible to as many people as possible and Specific enough to measure. There are two versions: *Proposed Development Scorecard* and *Municipal Review Scorecard*. In interpreting the results it is important to remember scorecards are conceptual tool, not science and important to identify areas of improvement. The criteria are – proximity to existing development and infrastructure; presence of range of housing options; does it protect open space; farmland and critical environmental areas; mix of uses; provides choices for getting around; walk-able, designed for personal interaction and respectful of community character. She said in order to get to Smart Growth we have to change where we grow and how we grow.

Mr. Coscia suggested that on the “Proposed Developments Smart Growth Scorecard”, a no to criteria 1 (if a potential development is near existing development and infrastructure), should result in an automatic failing grade.

Ms. Lewis pointed out that center can be in any Planning Area. A center in Planning Area IV will not be near existing development and by the scorecard this would get an automatic failing grade.

Mr. Cantu objected to the Municipal Review Scorecard saying it is overly simplistic and can be dangerous. He said it is subject to misuse and the actual scoring on municipal plans is dramatically flawed.

Bus Rapid Transit Update

Stanley Platt, DVRPC presented the update. There was one meeting of the committee at which MPOs, NJDOT, NJ Transit, counties, TMAs, several municipalities and large employers and developers were represented. He said participants agreed to proceed with BRT study. He related information about the New Starts Program- a federal funding conduit for expensive major transportation projects that states could not afford to do themselves. He said a long waiting list exists and to get on that list a rating system is in place. In order to get on the list a state project must both meet certain criteria and acquire sufficient points. Elements of NJ Transit *System Planning/Alternatives Analysis* were described. Mr. Platt said the next steps were to develop a detailed scope of work and cost and develop a funding package for the study.

Jack Kanarek, NJ Transit added that to move forward with the BRT study, available funding need to be defined. Depending on how funding is available a scope will be developed.

Mr. Coscia said the next steps should not be a study but a feasibility analysis. This would generate locally preferred alternative (LPA). If all is in agreement with LPA then move on into EIS.

Mr. Platt said a rough cost estimate for the project is \$900,000.

Mr. Coscia asked what was the most likely place to get the project funded.

Mr. Decter said West Windsor's proposal for living communities grant was close to getting approval. He asked what should communities do in the mean time to facilitate the BRT project.

In reply Mr. Platt said municipalities should work with DVRPC and NJ Transit.

Highway Projects

Willie Colquitt, NJDOT gave the forum an update on US Route 1 widening. The project includes an 8.5-mile stretch of US Route 1 and goes from Cozzens Lane in North Brunswick to Independence Way in South Brunswick. The project was initiated by South Brunswick. NJDOT did a Needs Assessment to determine the traffic problems in the corridor. It was determined that future travel demand cannot be adequately served by the existing facility. Fifty-five percent of the traffic on US 1 in South Brunswick was regional in nature. Six out of ten vehicles in South Brunswick do not have an origin or destination in South Brunswick. By the year 2013 all 15 intersections in the study area will be failing. At present a smart growth process is being carried out. NJDOT is reaching out to South Brunswick, Office of Smart Growth, Middlesex County, NJ Transit to discuss a strategy for the smart growth process. Three aspects are being contemplated – education, visioning and planning.

Mr. Ververides said he was concerned about the timing of the project. He said there are areas that can be done immediately; the private sector should be involved in getting some of these improvements accomplished.

Ms. Brake said this should be studied in greater detail because there is a lot to know about each of the intersections. She asked if South Brunswick was in agreement with what was presented for the intersections.

Craig Marshall, South Brunswick Planning said several intersections are still under discussion.

Mr. Ververides said the group should also be considering emergency type programs, for example blizzards and problems with transportation system, homeland security if something happens in this area.

Mr. Coscia said New Jersey is light years ahead of Pennsylvania in doing this. Specifically for transportation there are areas that are being processed.

Pete Rayner, Greater Mercer TMA said that the TMA has worked with municipalities in working out there emergency plans, so there is some experience out there.

