

**MEETING MINUTES
OF THE DVRPC REGIONAL CITIZENS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 10, 1998**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ajay Creshkoff corrected a typographical error on page four, indicating that the sentence should read "... writing to the chief economists of various major departments ...". The minutes of the January 13, 1998 RCC meeting were approved as corrected.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Dennis Winters welcomed and introduced Ridgeley Ware, DVRPC Board Chair, who sat in on the RCC meeting. Ware thanked the citizens for their comments and innovative thinking.

CROSS COUNTY CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES:

Rich Bickel, SEPTA's Director of Long-Range Planning, presented comments in response to previous RCC resolutions passed on the Cross County Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS) process. Bickel stated that the Cross County MIS and Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) look at the 48-mile corridor from Morrisville, NJ to Glen Loch, PA. The corridor traverses three counties and follows the Morrisville Rail Line, which is currently owned by Conrail and will shortly be taken over by Norfolk Southern. A feasibility study was completed in 1994 and indicated the ISTEA-mandated MIS. Working with an ISTEA earmark, SEPTA chose to combine the MIS and draft EIS, a process that began in May, 1996 and will be completed in June, 1998. The MIS will result in a locally preferred alternative that fulfills the goal of achieving consensus on solutions to the problems along the corridor. This study represents the first transit project in this region to undergo an MIS and Draft EIS from scratch.

The primary consultant to SEPTA for the corridor study is LS Transit Systems, Inc., which is responsible for the technical process; the study also has had an active public involvement program, which is being handled by Kise, Straw and Kolodner, subconsultant to LS Transit Systems. Bickel reviewed a hand-out that outlined needs, goals and objectives, as well as alternatives studied. The goals and objectives have been agreed to by Pennsylvania's environmental agencies and serve as the guiding principles for the types of facilities to be chosen. The short list of alternatives includes regional rail (EMU); light rail (along varying alignments); and a busway. Bickel pointed out that diesel rail has also been added to the short list. Bickel provided Year 2020 ridership numbers; namely, 15,600 riders (electric light rail option); 15,200 riders (diesel light rail and regional rail option, including King of Prussia and Norristown to Morrisville); 10,000 riders (rail options without King of Prussia but to Trenton); and 8,000 riders (busway). Bickel also stated that more than 80% of these riders are

estimated to be new to the system.

In response to RCC questions, Bickel commented that SEPTA is not looking at service to New York at this time; and that federal law prohibits light rail operating on the same tracks as heavy rail. The SEPTA Board will select a preferred alternative and then the DVRPC Board would be asked to adopt the specific alternative as part of its Year 2020 Plan. The Cross County Corridor is currently in competition for funding with the Schuylkill Valley Metro and about 90 other major initiatives throughout the country. SEPTA's first priority at this time is the Schuylkill Valley Metro, which is forecasted to have more than 30,000 riders in the year 2020 but with a lower proportion of new riders. SEPTA is in discussions with Norfolk Southern about fitting these two potential rail lines into its priorities. The two rail lines also support the Year 2020 Plan goals by enhancing intermodalism and focusing land use.

SEPTA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Corey Randolph, SEPTA Manager, Communications, Capital Projects, as well as a representative of Kise, Straw and Kolodner, were present to answer questions about SEPTA's public participation effort. This was also in response to an RCC resolution passed in January, 1998. Ms. Randolph stated that SEPTA is committed to an open and all-inclusive public involvement process. However, federal requirements are silent on specific suggestions for achieving this goal. SEPTA has consistently forwarded information to the public at major project milestones, such as at the conclusion of the alternatives analysis. These milestones were also marked by open house meetings that lasted for two to four hours and provided an opportunity for the public to comment and to complete surveys. Three of these public meetings have been held to date; the next round is scheduled in April, 1998.

Ms. Randolph handed out copies of the Cross County Chronicle newsletter, which is distributed to a mailing list of 6000 every four or five months. And, she pointed out that SEPTA has held focus groups involving intimate meetings with small numbers of people to discuss concerns. Individuals who live and work in the study corridor, as well as those who would use the rail line to commute to work were part of the focus groups. SEPTA has also placed ads, run radio spots, and sent flyers out to educate the public. The RCC offered suggestions and comments that focused on better and more thorough education of the public and more documentation of comments received.

EASTWICK STATION UPDATE:

Jeff Knueppel, SEPTA Project Engineer, stated that a temporary station has been erected at Eastwick to supplement the needs of the new PNC Bank operation center that opened there in September, 1997. An agreement was reached between PNC and the City of Philadelphia to first provide bus service (through December, 1997) and then to open the temporary station. A more permanent facility at Eastwick has now been placed in SEPTA's capital plan. Knueppel reviewed the work that went into finalizing the temporary station; he stated that this site is evolving and other site improvements may be made prior to the permanent facility being completed. Handicapped access, lighting and signage are

already in place.

There are problems with full utilization of the site, although it does permit several buses to stop. SEPTA hopes to be under construction on the permanent station by the year 2000. This project will include an overpass, elevators, full bus access, and a left turn from lane Bartram Ave.

The RCC discussed the issue of low- and high-level platforms; an overpass over the catenary; ridership numbers; local usage and fares. Knueppel pointed out that bi-directional trackage and speed are issues at the station. The City has received approval and funding in FY 1999 to study further needs in the airport area. There may be a re-examination of the scope of the Eastwick Station project.

TIP AMENDMENT 9808:

Paul Truban, NJDOT Project Engineer for Planning, outlined the portion of TIP Amendment 9808 that deals with improvements to US 1 and County Route 571 (Millstone Bypass). He stated that the project began in the mid-1980's and that a determination was made in 1997 that a Congestion Management System (CMS) Study should be done. NJDOT is aware of the need for multi-modalism and the need to address public concerns, and is eager to meet NEPA and ISTEA requirements. DVRPC is managing the CMS Study, while NJDOT is the sponsor. A CMS Steering Committee has been established to guide the process, and is composed of the Princeton area planning boards, the counties, the local TMA, FHWA, NJ Transit, NJDOT and DVRPC. Truban stated that a public meeting was held in November, 1997 and that Fred Harris, the consultant, was present to address CMS issues. He pointed out that the purpose of the CMS is to determine whether a range of travel demand management strategies would reduce traffic enough to eliminate the need for additional single occupant vehicle (SOV). The study also identifies commitments to implement recommended strategies in conjunction with the SOV capacity improvement.

Truban reviewed the initial list of strategies considered, the evaluations of those strategies that were not eliminated, and resulting conclusions. The findings of the study indicate that CMS strategies alone will not meet the need to reduce congestion -- therefore an SOV capacity improvement is necessary. Truban also outlined the commitments that are being considered at this time. The final CMS Study will be available in March, 1998.

Peggy Killmer, a representative of STOP, questioned a timetable that had been issued earlier by NJDOT. The TIP Amendment presented to the RCC this month proposes programming \$2 million for design in FY 2000, \$25 million in FY 2001 for right-of-way acquisition, and \$25 million in FY 2002 for construction. The RCC questioned why the TIP Amendment is preceding the release of the final CMS Study. Ms. Killmer pointed out that the Princeton Regional Planning Board has rejected the CMS. She also reviewed a list of comments and questions that included: Why did the CMS reject many CMS strategies without benefit of detailed analysis?; the CMS Study assumes that a final alignment has been chosen -- Isn't an Environmental Assessment needed to evaluate several project alignments prior to a final design being chosen?;

What effect will the proposed alignment have on the Delaware and Raritan Canal?; and Why has NJDOT traffic modeling used “unfocused” data without additional traffic counts to recalibrate the model? Paul Truban responded by noting that NJDOT is not grandfathering an Environmental Assessment; he also stated that the agency could live with just submitting the design portion of the TIP Amendment without obligating the additional money for right-of-way and construction.

Patricia Horrocks, Transportation Subcommittee Chair, stated that the subcommittee recommended approval of the segments of TIP Amendment 9808 that included Traffic Signal #16 and the Collingswood Circle Elimination. However, the subcommittee could not come to agreement on the Millstone Bypass project.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Pat Horrocks, seconded by Jane Glenn) to recommend that the Board approve Traffic Signal #16 and the Collingswood Circle Elimination.

MOTION CARRIED. (See voting record.)

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Pat Horrocks, seconded by Peggy Killmer) to recommend that the Board concur with \$2 million for design of improvements to US 1 and CR 571.

MOTION FAILED. (See voting record.)

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Claudia Crane, seconded by Jane Glenn) to recommend that the Board oppose Improvements to US 1 and CR 571 as written.

AMENDMENT (by Peggy Killmer, seconded by Jane Glenn) to note that a more comprehensive Congestion Management System Study needs to be done to look at additional alternatives.

MOTION, AS AMENDED, CARRIED. (See voting record.)

TIP AMENDMENT 9738:

Patricia Horrocks, Transportation Subcommittee chair, reviewed TIP Amendment 9738, which relates to public outreach efforts associated with the Clean Air initiatives. These include a public information program for the I & M project in Pennsylvania, as well as contract services for ozone action. The

subcommittee recommends that the RCC approve TIP Amendment 9738.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Pat Horrocks, seconded by Regina Botkin) to recommend that the Board approve TIP Amendment 9738.

MOTION CARRIED. (See voting record.)

TIP AMENDMENT 9806:

TIP Amendment 9806 is a request from NJ Transit to move funds for the design phase of the Morrisville Yard, and for Comet II overhaul. The subcommittee recommends approval of TIP Amendment 9806.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Pat Horrocks, seconded by Claudia Crane) to recommend that the Board approve TIP Amendment 9806.

MOTION CARRIED. (See voting record.)

TIP AMENDMENT 9807:

Ms. Horrocks then reviewed a number of projects that had been submitted by New Jersey as TIP modifications. These 14 county projects are bridge replacement projects that have been grouped together and are exempt from air quality standards. NJDOT will examine them for pedestrian and bicycle accessibility. The subcommittee again questioned why maps could not be prepared to show where these projects are located. The subcommittee recommends that the RCC approve the 14 county projects that are listed under TIP Amendment 9807.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE :

MOTION (by Pat Horrocks, seconded by Sue McNamara) to recommend that the Board approve TIP Amendment 9807.

MOTION CARRIED. (See voting record.)

TIP AMENDMENT 9737:

Ms. Horrocks stated that TIP Amendment 9737 contains improvements to the Chestnut Street

Transitway. At the Transportation Subcommittee meeting, Claudia Crane and Dennis Winters expressed dismay at the direction the plans were taking and questioned the lack of public participation. The Center City Residents' Association has not been informed of this project.

Winters cited the poor pedestrian and bicycle planning and stated that this is a Congressional earmark that is ill-advised. The subcommittee discussed the negative impact of earmarks that take decisions such as this away from the local entity. The citizens discussed the history of the Chestnut Street project and believe that the latest impetus for change came from the business association there. The subcommittee recommends that the RCC oppose TIP Amendment 9737 because of its poor design, the need for better public participation, and the lack of community input.

Claudia Crane then presented a list of concerns that included narrowing the sidewalks, widening the street, bringing back auto traffic and parking. Dennis Winters presented a position paper from the Clean Air Council that described the lack of vision and imagination, as well as the safety issues, inherent in the current design.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Pat Horrocks, seconded by Cathy Zukoski) to recommend that the Board oppose TIP Amendment 9737 because of poor design, the need for better public participation, and the lack of community input.

MOTION CARRIED. (See voting record.)

UPDATE OF THE YEAR 2020 LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION PLAN:

Pat Horrocks stated that Don Shanis, DVRPC's Associate Director of Transportation Planning, had met with the Transportation Subcommittee and outlined the implications associated with disapproval of the New Jersey State Implementation Plan (SIP) by the US Department of Environmental Protection (EPA). New Jersey's inspection and maintenance program did not meet EPA deadlines, and therefore, NJDOT's options to advance federally assisted transportation projects will be limited once a conformity freeze occurs on April 10, 1998. Shanis stated that DVRPC's transportation plan must be updated every three years, and he is proposing updating it now so that project review can take place before the conformity freeze. The DVRPC long-range plan for the region must conform with the SIP to achieve air quality standards.

DVRPC had planned to update its transportation and land use plan in November of this year, but would move the process forward to accommodate New Jersey. If the update occurs now, there is less opportunity for development and review. However, if the Commission waits until November, there is a risk that the plan won't be recognized because the conformity determination cannot be made. The purpose of the update is to analyze land use and transportation issues to see if they have changed since

plan adoption. The subcommittee recommends that the RCC authorize DVRPC staff to complete the necessary work immediately for the plan update and to proceed with a public comment period. The subcommittee also asks the RCC to go on record urging New Jersey to correct its SIP as soon as possible, and to resubmit its comments regarding the four amendments to the Plan that were adopted in July, 1997.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Pat Horrocks, seconded by Ajay Creshkoff) to recommend that the Board authorize DVRPC staff to complete the necessary work immediately for the Year 2020 Plan Update and to proceed with a public comment period.

MOTION CARRIED. (See voting record.)

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Pat Horrocks, seconded by Jane Glenn) to recommend that the DVRPC Board urge New Jersey to correct its SIP as soon as possible. The RCC wishes to resubmit its comments regarding the four amendments to the Year 2020 Plan that were adopted in July, 1997. They are as follows:

The RCC recommends:

a. Improvements to US 1 and CR 571

That the Board acknowledge that improvements are needed in this area, but the Millstone Bypass may not necessarily be the appropriate answer to the problem. A Congestion Management Study (CMS) should be completed before progressing.

b. NJ 42/I-295 Interchange

That the Board not approve the NJ 42/I-295 Interchange project because transit could be considered as an alternative in solving the volume safety issues.

c. Southern New Jersey Light Rail System

That the Board support the Mt. Holly - Moorestown Rail Line as a priority in the Year 2020 Long-Range Plan. Serious concerns should be

expressed about the proposed Camden - Trenton Rail Line because the project lacks details about project and capital costs and recovery ratio; no credible patronage figures are available from detailed computer modeling; maintenance of freight service on this route has not been clearly defined; NJ Transit has not demonstrated that their selected mode is the preferred mode; and this is such a major investment that an MIS should be completed before any money is committed for engineering and construction.

d. New Jersey Turnpike Widening

That the Board not endorse the New Jersey Turnpike Widening because of the need for an alternatives analysis; because congestion pricing could be used to reduce traffic; and because there needs to be an overall view of movement along this corridor.

MOTION CARRIED. (See voting record.)

PLANNING BEYOND THE PIPELINE:

John Ward, DVRPC Senior Transportation Planner, announced that Planning Beyond the Pipeline is a new project in the Work Program that was requested by New Jersey but is applicable to the entire region. The purpose of the project is the generate new transportation ideas and develop improvement projects that would eventually feed into the TIP pipeline. This would allow for the identification and promotion of viable projects that might not otherwise be funded. This inventory of potential projects would be financially unconstrained, would not be impeded by bureaucratic procedures, and should incorporate immediate needs and long-term commitments. Ward asked the RCC to direct its Transportation Subcommittee to identify a list of projects that could be incorporated into this inventory. Inventory sheets were distributed and will be provided to the subcommittee at its next meeting. The RCC will then review the subcommittee's list and consolidate it for staff.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

Linda Ingenthron stated that the Rules Subcommittee had held its first meeting; they are examining the mission statement but are not yet ready to make recommendations. They will meet again at 11 a.m. on March 10 prior to the RCC meeting.

Cathy Zukoski reported that the Legislative Subcommittee met and is continuing its information gathering process. She is looking into inviting a speaker who would provide information on how to read legislative bills. This subcommittee will meet next at 12 Noon on March 4.

Ernest Cohen announced that copies of the large report compiled by the Year 2020 Task Force have been forwarded to the 21st Century Commission.

OTHER BUSINESS:

A second proposal on recycling, as refined by Alma Wynne and Jane Glenn, was distributed. However, action on this issue was deferred until March because of the late hour.