

**MEETING MINUTES
OF THE DVRPC REGIONAL CITIZENS COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 8, 1998**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Wayne DiFrancesco corrected the minutes of November 10, 1998, stating that he was present, although his name was not on the voting record; Roberta Ehrenberg clarified a point regarding proposed legislation under the Legislative Subcommittee report. The minutes of the RCC meeting of November 10, 1998 were approved as corrected.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Dennis Winters, Chair, reviewed the current process to remove RCC members from the mailing list; presently, Candy Snyder carries members for approximately nine months after they have stopped attending before eliminating their names from the membership/ mailing list. He believes there should be a set policy regarding this issue and instructed the Rules Subcommittee to meet to review this issue and to return with a recommendation in this regard. Linda Ingenthron agreed to call a Rules Subcommittee meeting prior to the next RCC meeting on January 12, 1999.

The RCC reviewed the proposed meeting dates for 1999, noting that the scheduled May RCC meeting should be corrected to May 11, 1999; the first DVRPC Board meeting of the year has been moved to January 21, 1999.

JOB ACCESS AND REVERSE COMMUTE COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM:

Richard Bickel, DVRPC's Associate Director of Regional Planning, explained that the DVRPC Board on December 4, 1998 directed its Policy Committee to meet and prioritize the list of applicants for the Job Access and Reverse Commute Competitive Grant Program before submission to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on December 31, 1998. Bickel asked the RCC to appoint a representative of the committee to provide input into this process. Dennis Winters appointed Darlene Messina since she did not have a conflict of interest with an application in this grant program.

ELECTION OF RCC CHAIR:

The Nominating Committee Chair, Sue McNamara, reported that the committee met and would like to put forth the name of Dennis Winters for the position of Calendar Year 1999 Chair. The floor was opened to further nominations; there being none, nominations were closed.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Lorraine Brill, seconded by Bob Machler) to name Dennis Winters RCC Chair for Calendar Year 1999 by acclimation.

MOTION CARRIED.

UPDATE ON I-295/76/42 TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT STUDY:

Stan Platt, DVRPC Manager of the Office of Congestion Management, explained that the Transportation Investment Study (TIS) being done for this interchange project is the same as the Major Investment Study (MIS) which has been deleted under the TEA-21 legislation. He noted that the TIS facilitates a collaborative planning process to allow decision-makers to choose the most appropriate improvements to the transportation system. Platt reviewed the current usage patterns, the regional impact of this South Jersey hub and the missing moves within these three roadways. More than 600 accidents per year occur on these roads, making this a major safety concern. Platt then reviewed the TIS Committee structure, improvement options and incident reduction options.

The RCC discussed their previous motion addressing this interchange and study; namely, that “the RCC recommends that the DVRPC Board support the Transportation Investment Study.

The RCC views this largely as a transportation capacity problem. We believe that transit alternatives can significantly, or even fully, address the mobility pressures of the area; the Burlington-Gloucester MIS needs to be considered. Specifically, the alternatives to be studied should include:

1. Light rail and modified light rail (modified PATCO) alternatives to Mantua where the Camden-Glasboro freight line intersects Route 55;
2. Furthermore, Atlantic City Rail Line improvements should include -
 - a. The addition of one peak hour peak direction round-trip;
 - b. Lessen travel time of each run by 20 - 35 minutes to what it was 50 years ago;
 - c. Directly extend service to Suburban Station.

In addition, the RCC encourages vigorous consistency with the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan, with particular emphasis on the transportation improvements listed above.”

George Sholy, Senior Civil Engineer at McCormick, Taylor and Associates, Inc., presented the changes in roadway geometry -- along the NJ 42/I-76 corridor from south of its interchange with NJ 55, through the US 130 interchange and the Walt Whitman/Ben Franklin Bridge split -- to be realized upon completion of construction projects now underway. Highlights included elimination of the southbound barrier, separating local and express lanes, and shortening of the northbound barrier; widening of NJ 42 from NJ 55 to southbound I-295; exclusive merge lanes from northbound NJ 55 onto northbound NJ 42 and an additional off-ramp lane from southbound NJ 42 to southbound NJ 55;

elimination or reduction of some weave movements by channelizing southbound I-295 from I-76 traffic; and operational ramp improvements and the provision of an appropriate acceleration/deceleration lane for traffic associated with US 130.

The RCC discussed safety concerns, alternative modes and a connection between NJ 42 and the New Jersey Turnpike.

PA 41 CORRIDOR STUDY UPDATE:

Stan Platt reviewed the status of this project, adding that the need for an investment study has yet to be determined. Major considerations include a new alignment (from the Delaware State Line to Chatham); a toll road; a railroad network update; alternate truck routes; and reactivation of a passenger rail line. Platt reported that staff is examining the effect of Pennsylvania Turnpike tolls on truckers using PA 41. Gail McFadden-Roberts, DVRPC Senior Transportation Planner, outlined the results of a freight survey, which addressed commodities, mode and origin/destination. Surprisingly, petroleum and its byproducts outranked fruit as the major import coming into Wilmington Harbor. However, petroleum is then shipped via pipeline while fruit is transported by truck, thus creating most of the truck traffic on PA 41. Approximately 65% of the fruit handled at the Port of Wilmington can be attributed to Dole and Chiquita. Containerized cargo then moves at a rate of 2700 trucks per week through the Route 41 corridor. About 50% of these commodities out of Wilmington are bound for other parts of Pennsylvania. Distance and travel time determine the mode of travel. 60% of the products out of Wilmington will stay within a 50-mile radius of Delaware. The most popular mode for products traveling between 200 and 600 miles is by truck.

The RCC discussed comparisons between the use of Route 41, Route 896 and the PA Turnpike. Don Nigro stated that he advocates discouraging development; he believes that a barrier toll at the state line would discourage truck traffic.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Don Nigro, seconded by Claudia Crane) that the RCC recommend that a barrier toll at the Delaware State Line be included as part of the no-build enhanced package for the PA 41 corridor. The RCC views such a facility as having the ability to discourage future sprawl into Chester County from Wilmington.

MOTION DEFERRED TO THE TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE.

Wayne DiFrancesco then proposed a recommendation that PennDOT study an on-line minimal highway expansion for PA 41. This recommendation was also deferred to the Transportation Subcommittee.

THE FEDERAL NEPA PROCESS:

Calvin Edghill, Community Planner with the Federal highway Administration, outlined the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which is invoked when federal funds are stipulated for a project. NEPA sets guidelines for scheduling transportation investments on the capital program, and provides strategies for dealing with environmental issues. The process examines the causes of problems and then offers solutions. Edghill noted the importance of public involvement in this process. All projects, including federal earmarks, must meet NEPA guidelines. Only Congress can exempt a project. An Environmental Investment Study (EIS) is the product of the NEPA process.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

Ernest Cohen reported that the Year 2020 Task Force needs more members.

Cathy Zukoski, Chair of the Legislative Subcommittee, announced that HB. 433, which would authorize the addition of bicycle racks on buses, has passed. The Governor has yet to sign the bill. This subcommittee also needs more volunteers.

Bill Rafsky announced that there was no Housing report.