

**MEETING MINUTES  
OF THE DVRPC REGIONAL CITIZENS COMMITTEE  
APRIL 17, 2001**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The minutes of the RCC meeting of March 13, 2001 were approved as mailed.

**CHAIR'S REPORT:**

Patrick Starr notified the RCC that Public Affairs staff has a conflict with the May 15th RCC meeting date because of the Ozone Action Kick-Off Event. The RCC was asked to consider moving the meeting to May 14<sup>th</sup> or May 16<sup>th</sup>. The group decided to move the meeting to Wednesday, May 16, 2001. A special notice will remind members of the date change.

Mr. Starr reviewed the highlights from the March 13<sup>th</sup> RCC officers' meeting which included a list of priorities. Mr. Starr noted that the attached highlighted list of priorities appeared in no particular order and were merely suggestions that came from the meeting. The list in no way represents a work plan for the RCC. He made special note that the RCC may invite David Engwicht to speak at a public meeting on traffic calming in the fall. This workshop could be sponsored by a number of groups including DVRPC and the RCC. He will get together again today with officers following the meeting.

**AUTHORIZATION TO OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR THE DRAFT FY 2002 - 2004 NEW JERSEY TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP):**

Judy Barnet, DVRPC Senior Transportation Planner, explained that DVRPC is seeking permission to open the public comment period for the Draft FY 2002-2004 New Jersey TIP. All of the TIP materials will be available to the public on the web in mid-May. Staff is in the process of selecting venues for meetings. DVRPC may try to book time at different association meetings for comment, as well as putting up displays at NJ Transit stations and area malls. A timeline for NJ TIP activities was included in the RCC meeting materials.

***ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:***

***MOTION*** (by Dennis Winters, seconded by Warren Strumpfer) to recommend that the DVRPC Board authorize staff to open a 30-day public comment period, to publish the Draft FY 2002 - 2004 New Jersey TIP and to hold public meetings for the purpose of gathering comments.

***MOTION CARRIED.*** (See Item A on voting record.)

## **TIP ACTION PA0121:**

Dennis Winters, Transportation Subcommittee Chair, reported that PennDOT has requested an amendment to the TIP to reflect adjustments in cost, schedule, and scope of six existing or former TIP projects as follows:

1. US 202 Expressway, Section 721, (#5356) - Bucks Co. - A \$2.8 million increase in final design costs due to changing and adding structures at sensitive environmental areas and an increase in the anticipated number of noise walls.
2. PA 309 Connector (#8749) - Montgomery Co. - A \$146,000 increase in the preliminary engineering phase. Add a \$2.36 million final design phase to FY03. The funding is for aerial images and digital mapping not included in the original plans.
3. PA 926/Parkersville Rd. Intersection Improvement (old TIP #6913) - Chester Co. - Add \$600,000 construction phase back to the TIP. Phase was not obligated in FY00.
4. PA 3, West Chester Pike Corridor Improvements (old TIP #7834) - Delaware Co. - Add \$2.2 million construction phase to the TIP. The phase was not obligated in FY00.
5. I-95 at PA 352 Ramp (#7129) - Delaware Co. - A 1.6 million increase in construction costs. A right-of-way phase for \$150,000 and a \$2.75 million utility relocation phase will be added. Design modifications are for the new CSX second track which increased the cost of the structure and railroad relocation.
6. McLean Station Rd. Bridge (old TIP #8725) - Montgomery Co. - Add an \$800,000 construction phase to the TIP. This phase was not obligated in FY00 as expected.

## **NEW PROJECTS:**

The following bridge improvements were programmed as maintenance with 100% state funding. The level of rehabilitation needed exceeds early estimates and continued state-only funding would seriously impact the city's allocation of maintenance funds.

7. Henry Ave. Bridge over Wissahickon Creek - Add \$200,000 design phase.
8. Henry Ave. Bridge over SEPTA R6 Line - Add \$300,000 design phase.

## **ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:**

**MOTION** (by Dennis Winters, seconded by Claudia Crane) to recommend that the DVRPC Board approve TIP Action PA0121, PennDOT's request to amend and/or modify the TIP to reflect adjustments in cost, schedule and scope of six existing or former TIP projects and to add two new projects, with the exception of US 202,

Section 700 and restates the committee's continuing opposition to this project.

**MOTION CARRIED.** (See Item B on voting record.)

*Discussion: The RCC raised a concern about sound barriers and the debate over their absorptive and resorptive qualities. The committee stressed that PennDOT should do a study and have public meetings on this issue. The RCC also questioned whether the CSX second track described in Project #5 above refers to a new or restored track.*

**TIP ACTION PA0125: CENTURY LANE BRIDGE, CITY OF PHILADELPHIA:**

The City of Philadelphia has requested that DVRPC add the Century Lane Bridge Rehabilitation project to the TIP. The City is proposing \$1.5 million for the construction phase only (\$1.2 million federal, \$300,000 City match.) The engineering will be completed in-house. The project rehabilitates an existing bridge across the Poquessing Creek in Northeast Philadelphia, crossing the Bucks County boundary into Bensalem Township. The structure is a stone arch bridge dating to the 1850's. Internal reinforcements will preserve the visual character of the structure. No visible external supports will be used. This project will maintain financial constraint.

***ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:***

**MOTION** (by Dennis Winters, seconded by Warren Strumpfer) to recommend that the DVRPC Board approve TIP Action PA0125, the City of Philadelphia's request to add the construction phase of the Century Lane Bridge Rehabilitation Project to the TIP. The RCC also applauds the concept of restoration and preservation of historic bridges.

**MOTION CARRIED.** (See Item C on voting record.)

**NEW JERSEY FY 2001 STUDY AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AMENDMENT:**

NJDOT has requested the addition of the concept development phase of the I-295/Rising Sun Rd. Missing Moves Project in Bordentown Township, Burlington County. NJDOT has been informed of increasing truck traffic on local and state highways leading to truck stops on Rising Sun Rd. adjacent to I-295. Residents and officials believe trucks use these roads instead of I-295 because the partial interchange at I-295 and Rising Sun Rd. does not provide for movements to and from the north. In light of this issue and the area's ongoing residential development, the Commissioner has requested a concept development study to examine the regional truck needs, the local transportation needs, and the need for the missing moves at the interchange.

The project will be undertaken with state funds and will not affect other project schedules. This project currently appears in the FY 2002 Study and Development pool.

***ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:***

***MOTION*** (by Dennis Winters, seconded by Lorraine Brill) to recommend that the DVRPC Board approve an amendment to the New Jersey FY 2001 Study and Development Program to add the concept development phase of the I-295/Rising Sun Road Missing Moves Project. The RCC also requests that the study include a complete analysis of future traffic patterns, particularly those of trucks, and land use impacts. In addition, the committee asks that the it be apprised of the results of the study as early as possible.

***MOTION CARRIED.*** (See Item D on voting record.)

**YEAR 2025 TASK FORCE RESOLUTION ON THE PRELIMINARY YEAR 2025**

**PLAN:**

Ernest Cohen and John Pawson reviewed their recent work on a new resolution offered for RCC approval. The RCC discussed the Draft Resolution on DVRPC's Preliminary Long-Range Plan.

***ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:***

***MOTION*** (by John Pawson, seconded by Harry Hyde) to recommend that the DVRPC Board consider the following resolution as the committee's interim input to the Year 2025 Long-Range Plan:

1. We urge that sprawl be minimized by restricting new development to "future growth areas."
2. We believe that land use goals will be most quickly realized if usable public transportation improvements are achieved soon. Therefore, we favor early and incremental completion of the most essential elements in the major transportation corridors. These corridors include, in no particular order, Schuylkill Valley, Northeast Philadelphia, and Cross County - west of Elwyn and north of Fox Chase and Lansdale.
3. As a general principle, rail service initiation or restoration without electrification should be considered to facilitate this early and economical expansion of service.
4. It is known that non-electric trains operate out of the upper level of 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station (Atlantic City Service) and have even been operated in the Penn Center Suburban Station. These facts should not be overlooked in short-range (5-10 year) planning.
5. Restoration of Newtown via Fox Chase (C18) service should be advanced. The RCC is concerned about reports that some elements of the rail line have been removed or made more difficult and expensive to restore. We urge that the Quakertown rail restoration project be restored from study status to full-project status.

6. As an added study project, service beyond Quakertown to Allentown via Bethlehem should be included. This extension should not be allowed to delay service as far as Quakertown.
7. The RCC reiterates its opposition to the Delaware River Tram (B004).
8. We oppose conversion of the Octoraro rail grade (D121) that would in any way interfere with or increase the cost of restoring commuter and freight rail service.
9. We concur with the policies of the aviation, bicycle and pedestrian, and goods movement elements of the Long-Range Plan.

**MOTION CARRIED.** (See Item E on voting record.)

*Discussion: The RCC focused on the level of detail in the document and the need for comment on issues of RCC concern, such as housing, transit-oriented development, sprawl, single occupancy vehicles, bicycle and pedestrian facilities or goods movement. Several members expressed concern over approving a document that was predominantly focused on public transportation. After much discussion and a report from the Transportation Subcommittee, the RCC decided not to take action on the paper. The committee felt that individuals could meet on Tuesday, May 1, 2001 at 11 a.m for the specific purpose of revising the resolution for May action. Ernest Cohen and John Pawson requested that interested parties submit their suggestions no later than April 30<sup>th</sup>. Comments will be accepted via email at [ssapinc@aol.com](mailto:ssapinc@aol.com); by mail in care of Ernest Cohen at 525 Midvale Road, Upper Darby, PA 19082; or by phone at 610-352-2689.*

### **HOMEOWNERSHIP: A DREAM STILL VANISHING?:**

Mary Bell, DVRPC Senior Regional Planner, presented *Homeownership: A Dream Still Vanishing?*, a follow-up to a report completed in 1990 entitled, *Homeownership: A Vanishing Dream?*, which focused specifically on the ability of the region's middle-income family to purchase a median-priced housing unit in each of the region's 353 municipalities.

The purpose of the current study is to update DVRPC's 1990 housing affordability assessment using 1998 housing and tax data. Unlike the first study, this new report also considers housing affordability for first-time homebuyers and for families who already own a home but are considering relocating, in addition to median-income families.

Difficulties in securing sound, affordable housing in accessible locations, once limited to the lowest income segment of the population, continue to affect moderate and median income households. Based on the study's methodology, housing affordability for prospective middle income homebuyers has improved significantly since 1989. Housing has become more affordable, however, largely because of changes in the market rather

than changes in land use or development practices. Lower home mortgage interest rates combined with average incomes that increased faster than housing sales prices and the ability to provide a higher down payment have enabled many families to afford a home.

It should be noted that this study considers housing affordability, but does not address housing quality, neighborhood character or any of the myriad of other factors that make a home attractive to a prospective homeowner. Thus, “affordable” municipalities may or may not be places where many families prefer to live. In Philadelphia and many of the region’s other cities and older boroughs, for example, the majority of the housing stock is affordable to prospective homebuyers, including first-time buyers. Other factors, however (including housing quality, education, crime and access to suburban employment opportunities), may in fact outweigh affordability as prospective homebuyers decide where they are going to live. Additionally, the study does not consider affordability for current residents. Finally, another challenge for the region’s suburban communities lies just ahead, as aging “baby-boomers” living in low density suburban developments reach retirement and face the prospect of continuing to afford to maintain their current homes and lifestyles on lower, fixed incomes.

**YEAR 2025 PUBLIC OUTREACH UPDATE:**

Barry Seymour, DVRPC Assistant Executive Director for Regional Planning, outlined the public comments received at three meetings that had been held in Burlington City, Philadelphia and Valley Forge as part of DVRPC’s public participation effort for the Year 2025 Plan. He stated that a summary is being compiled and will be sent to the committees and the Board within the next two weeks. The current strategy include presenting the plan to the Board in May.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS (EIS’s):**

Dennis Winters asked that the RCC Chairman forward a request to the DVRPC Board that once again asks that regional agencies make all EIS’s available to the committee for review. The RCC and DVRPC staff have repeatedly requested these statements from PennDOT, NJDOT, SEPTA, DRPA, etc. but have not received any to date. The RCC’s Environmental/Legislative Subcommittee is charged with reviewing these documents.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Tom Cooper stated that the Schuylkill Valley Metro project is not moving. He pointed out that the projected ridership numbers for the project have driven SEPTA to look at fifteen minute headways, thus forcing Norfolk Southern into a defensive position. He introduce the following motion:

"I move that the RCC respectfully request that the DVRPC Board, and its Executive Director, arrange a rerun of the Travel Simulation Model in the Commuter Rail Mode for the Schuylkill Valley Metro project for the purpose of forecasting a Commuter Rail ridership to supercede the 50,000 forecasted Light Rail ridership which became invalid in April, 2000 when SEPTA changed the project from Light Rail to Commuter Rail." The motion was seconded by John Pawson.

However, the motion was tabled and referred to the Transportation Subcommittee when questions arose regarding the work already done in this regard by Don Nigro. Mr. Nigro will be contacted to attend the May subcommittee meeting to provided his insights.

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:**

There were no additional reports.