

**MEETING MINUTES
OF THE DVRPC REGIONAL CITIZENS COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 19, 2002**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Karen Friedman noted that in the first item of new business (page 6), the traffic signal synchronization project is for the Route 332 bypass, not Route 413, as stated. The minutes of the RCC meeting of October 15, 2002 were approved with this change.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Patrick Starr addressed the Rail Restoration Study project that the RCC had recommended for the 2004 Work Program. Mr. Starr indicated that although this project has been near the top of the RCC's priorities for several years, it has never been adopted. He recommended a meeting between DVRPC staff member Ted Dahlburg, and volunteers from the RCC, to discuss possible ways to move this project forward in the future. Ernest Cohen and Patricia Horrocks volunteered to represent the RCC's interests in this discussion.

Mr. Starr turned the meeting over to Warren Strumpfer, Nominating Committee Chair, for election of the new RCC Chair for 2003. Mr. Strumpfer indicated that the committee had identified Dennis Winters as a candidate. There were no nominations from the floor.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Warren Strumpfer, seconded by Ajay Creshkoff) to elect Dennis Winters as Chair of the RCC for calendar year 2003.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The RCC thanked Patrick Starr for his service to the committee over the past year.

Mr. Starr extended an invitation to Dennis Winters, as the new Chair, to attend the upcoming DVRPC Board Retreat.

TIP ACTION PA03-04 (MPMS #13945 - ROUTE 202, SECTION 300):

PennDOT has requested an amendment to the FY 2003 PA TIP to include a preliminary design phase and to amend the FY 2004 PA TIP to include a final design phase for Route 202, Section 300.

The proposal includes final roadway design for the realignment of Cedar Hollow Road which requires widening of a bridge encroachment, and the preparation of final design write-ups for the four portions of Section 300 that have been broken out into separate construction projects. The funding increase also includes an additional 1300 foot retaining wall. The request for funding would program \$1.436 million highway/\$359,000 State in FY03 for preliminary design; \$4.396 million highway/\$1.099 million State in FY04 for final design; and would acknowledge \$3.2 million in advance construct funding. Financial constraint and conformity would not be affected.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Dennis Winters, seconded by Warren Strumpfer) to continue to oppose the widening of Route 202 because of the new capacity that it represents. However, if the highway project is going to move forward, then the RCC recommends pedestrian and bicycle improvements to crossroads, specifically to Cedar Hollow Road, and to consider express bus service.

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

NEW JERSEY - LOCAL SCOPING HIGHWAY PROGRAM:

DVRPC has requested to use a pot of money within the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to work with NJDOT to take smaller projects through the scoping phase. Once scoping is completed, local communities can then move right in final design in many cases. Two projects from the New Jersey Problem Identification and Prioritization Program have been targeted; namely, Florence-Columbus Road (CR656) - US 130 to I-295, and Park Avenue Bridge (CR641) over the North Branch of Timber Creek.

Florence-Columbus Road: This project is located in Florence Twp., Burlington County. This section of the roadway was identified as congested and has mobility problems. A study will be conducted to look at what can be done to improve traffic flow and turning movements along this section.

Park Avenue Bridge: This bridge is located in Haddon Twp., Camden County. The goal of the project is to identify and design improvements to the existing concrete bridge that has experienced road settlement.

DISCUSSION: Warren Strumpfer noted that he has asked DVRPC staff why this particular bridge was chosen, and that he is waiting for an answer. He also indicated that he had trouble locating the identified bridges. The RCC concluded that a map would have been helpful in clearing up confusion with this project.

(NOTE: Staff has responded that all requests come from the counties to DVRPC. In this case, Camden County had identified the Park Avenue Bridge as a high priority. This particular local bridge fits into the Local Scoping Program. State bridges are handled by NJDOT.)

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Dennis Winters, seconded by Lorraine Brill) to approve the inclusion of two projects in the Local Scoping Program; namely, Florence-Columbus Road (CR656) - US 130 to I-295, and Park Avenue Bridge (CR641) over the North Branch of Timber Creek.

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

HIGHWAY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION CHANGE (MONTGOMERY COUNTY):

Montgomery County has requested that Lafayette Street in Norristown be reclassified as an urban minor arterial. Presently the street is two lane directional with an ADT of approximately 8899 between DeKalb and Franklin Streets. It runs along the industrial waterfront and is under study to be extended to connect with Conshohocken Road. Also under consideration is a slip ramp from this road to the Turnpike. The change in classification is part of the plan to improve Norristown and the waterfront area. The county, PennDOT and DVRPC are in agreement that this classification change should take place.

DISCUSSION: Discussion focused on this project's relation to future slip ramps, and on its impact on the Schuylkill Valley Trail.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (by Dennis Winters, seconded by John Pawson) to approve the request to revise the functional classification system in Montgomery County to include Lafayette Street as an urban minor arterial. In addition, the RCC asks the DVRPC Board to forward to Montgomery County its concerns regarding the integrity of the Schuylkill Valley Trail, access to and from the Transportation Center, and the railroad grade crossing at Ford Street.

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

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY INTERSECTIONS:

Mr. Winters completed his Transportation Subcommittee report with a recommendation to adopt the following statement as the RCC's official policy on bicycle and pedestrian access:

Every transportation project and program has an impact on bicyclists and pedestrians; that impact should be positive. A seamless network of on-street bicycling and walking facilities, trails and transit should connect homes, jobs, schools, shopping, families, friends and other origins. Investments in new and existing road and transit facilities must accommodate safe bicycling and walking. State and local transportation plans should ensure safe access for bicyclists and pedestrians, especially at intersections.

Mr. Winters indicated that this statement would replace the RCC's existing statement, which only addresses bicycles.

DISCUSSION: A concern was raised regarding the "one size fits all" nature of the statement; there was some disagreement among members as to whether bicyclists should really have a place on all roadways, particularly busy, crowded thoroughfares. John Boyle reminded members of bicyclists' legal rights to the roads. The discussion then focused on how this statement would be used by the RCC, and to whom the statement should be directed. The general consensus was that the statement would be used to guide future decisions of the RCC; in addition, it would be directed to staff for consideration in all future transportation projects.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION (By Linda Ingenthron, seconded by Patricia Horrocks) to table the discussion and return the statement to the transportation subcommittee for revision.

MOTION FAILED.

MOTION (By Dennis Winters, seconded by Miles Day) to adopt the above bicycle and pedestrian statement as RCC policy.

MOTION CARRIED. (See item D on voting record.)

ROUTE 322 LAND USE STRATEGIES STUDY

Richard Bickel, DVRPC Deputy Director, Regional Planning Division, presented a recently completed study on the Route 322 corridor in Delaware County between I-95 in Chester City and Route 1 and Route 202 in Concordville.

The highway serves two conflicting functions: as a regional highway connecting I-95 to

Route 1 and Route 202, and as a commercial center for retail shops, restaurants, and businesses. The study was initiated by Delaware County to supplement PennDOT's plans for large-scale improvements to the corridor. Recognizing that expanding the highway won't fully relieve traffic concerns, the study explores other ways to reduce congestion, manage access, increase safety, and plan for future growth to minimize the burden on the highway.

The study's findings are consistent with other recent land-use studies, in recommending transit-oriented development (TOD). Many of the recommendations deal with transit and pedestrian improvements along Route 322 and nearby roads, increasing transportation alternatives, and controlling vehicle access to Route 322 from adjacent businesses and retail centers. Over the past year, DVRPC and the Delaware County Planning Department held several meetings with each of the municipalities to discuss the recommendations and to ensure implementation on the local level. By addressing the corridor as a whole, the study has created a framework that allows local projects to fit in as part of a larger land use and transportation strategy.

DISCUSSION: RCC members were particularly concerned with accommodation of bicycles and pedestrians in the plan, how the study relates to specific 2025 goals, and the inclusion of public transit systems (particularly bus service). Members also addressed the issue of sprawl, and their concern that this plan may facilitate sprawl in Delaware County. Members also discussed the possibility that building a dense population in this corridor may help prevent sprawl from spreading to nearby areas.

SMARTCOMMUTE MORTGAGE PROGRAM

Barry Seymour, DVRPC Assistant Executive Director, Regional Planning Division, explained the SmartCommute Mortgage Program, a pilot program which offers financial incentives for purchasing a home near transit. Because public transportation costs less than car ownership, transit users can use their anticipated savings from reduced commuting costs as additional qualifying income for a mortgage. Households with two wage-earners will be able to figure in an extra \$250 a month in income (or \$200 for one wage-earner households).

The loans, which will be offered by Citizens Bank and underwritten by the Fannie Mae Corporation, do come with conditions. Potential homes must be within a quarter mile of two or more bus stops or half a mile of a train station and accessible to transit on foot. The buyers will also have to limit themselves to two cars per couple, or one for a single person.

Mr. Seymour indicated that although the pilot program is for Pennsylvania only, they are in talks with Fannie Mae's New Jersey office to extend the program there. He also noted that the Reinvestment Fund will be evaluating the success of the program during its pilot year.

DISCUSSION: The RCC discussed the possibility of including transit passes with the mortgage, as pilot programs in other cities have done. Dennis Winters also voiced a concern that a program of this type may have negative results— by encouraging people with cars to save money by moving near transit, it would reduce housing possibilities for those who are completely dependent on public transit.

LINKING WORK PROGRAM PROJECTS TO THE LONG-RANGE PLAN:

Mr. Seymour distributed a handout (attached) which lists major policies of the Year 2025 Long Range Plan, and categorized DVRPC's projects and programs according to the policy that the project upholds.

DISCUSSION: Members were concerned with the lack of an evaluation process that would determine the extent to which each project achieves its goals relative to the 2025 Plan. The discussion produced many suggestions, including organizing DVRPC's progress reports by long-range goals for better evaluation, requiring that each work program item budget funds for evaluation of its effectiveness, and proposing a specific study as work program item for next year that would identify appropriate measures to determine effectiveness of each DVRPC project in reaching Long Range Plan goals. Members also suggested providing a checklist with each work program item that would indicate which long-term goals it relates to, then following up at the end to determine the project's success in those goals.

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (TCDI) UPDATE:

Mr. Seymour announced that the new TCDI Program Guide has been released. He noted some specific changes to eligibility requirements. The deadline for TCDI projects is January 22; Mr. Seymour noted that he will be asking the RCC to provide representatives to help review the applications.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

25 Year Task Force: Ernest Cohen reported the committee would like SEPTA and NJ Transit to provide data on the usage of bicycle racks on the front of busses. Mr. Cohen suggested a motion to request that the DVRPC Board pass this request on to SEPTA and NJ Transit. Warren Strumpfer seconded the motion. Lorraine Brill made a motion to table this motion until the subcommittee has further discussed and crafted a resolution. The motion to table passed with no dissent.

Ernest then turned the report over to John Pawson, who read his resolution (see attached) encouraging the region to be among the forefront of clean-energy solutions.

NEW BUSINESS:

Patrick Starr recommended that for the next meeting, the RCC should consider a resolution acknowledging Citizen's Bank for its outstanding contributions to the region.

Lorraine Brill announced that SEPTA is planning to renegotiate the R-8 Line, changing it from two tracks to one. They are set to vote on this issue at their November 21 meeting. Ms. Brill was concerned by the lack of community involvement in this decision, and encouraged members to attend the SEPTA meeting to voice their opinion. Bob Machler stated that anyone unable to attend the meeting could send their concerns to: save-r8@dvarp.org.

Bill Marston brought up the status of the proposed tram over the Delaware River connecting Camden and Penn's Landing. Mr. Marston wanted to ask DVRPC to prepare a report regarding their position on the tram, given that development efforts at Penn's Landing have fallen through. Mr. Starr recommended that Bill bring his concerns to the transportation subcommittee.

Bob Machler announced DVARP's trip to Reading on December 7.

Warren Strumpfer suggested that the RCC ask NJDOT to present evidence of implementation of context-sensitive design efforts in New Jersey at a future meeting.

Patrick Starr announced a day-long workshop on Thursday, November 21, sponsored by DVRPC and addressing revitalization of the area's older boroughs and towns.