

**The next meeting of the Central Jersey Transportation Forum
will be July 16th, 2010 at 9:00 am
at the South Brunswick Public Works Building
540 Ridge Road
Monmouth Junction, New Jersey**

**ONE PAGE OVERVIEW
Central Jersey Transportation Forum
June 30, 2010 Work Group Meeting**

Welcome and Opening

Don Shanis, Deputy Executive Director, DVRPC, welcomed participants and thanked everyone for attending. Lonnie Weiss, Weiss Consulting, asked the group to develop concrete recommendations about changes to the structure and function of the Forum, with the ultimate goal of increasing the Forum's regional impact.

Shared Context Work

The group participated in a discussion of ground rules for the day's session, followed by a review of the agenda. Ms. Weiss stressed the importance of establishing a shared context, especially when dealing with a complex region and set of issues.

Survey Input from CJTF Membership

Jesse Buerk, Transportation Planner, DVRPC, provided a brief overview of the results of the online survey, which received over 100 responses. A brief report of summary charts, and a more extensive document with the complete survey results were distributed. Mr. Buerk thanked all those who participated.

Developing Recommendations

The group considered what it means for the Forum to take more action. How would decisions be made? What else can the Forum do to have more effect? The group developed short-term and long-term recommendations, with a slightly greater emphasis on short-term solutions. Recommendations included structural and procedural suggestions for action teams, plans to circulate a voting structure concept for further refinement, and suggestions about how often the full Forum would meet.

Next Steps and Closing

Ms. Weiss wrapped up the session by thanking participants and reviewing some of the key issues, including the importance of preserving a regional approach, as well as strategic levels of coordination and communication. Pam Mount, Councilwoman, Lawrence Township; Bill Neary, Executive Director, Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc.; and Theodore Chase, Councilman, Franklin Township Council & Planning Board, volunteered to present the group's recommendations to the full Forum at the meeting on the 16th.

Meeting Summary

Central Jersey Transportation Forum

June 30, 2010 Work Group Meeting

ATTENDEES: 21 participants – Please advise if you attended but are not on the list.

Municipalities			
Theodore	Chase	Councilman	Franklin Township Council & Planning Board
Gene	Strupinsky	Business Advocate	Hillsborough Township Economic & Business Dev. Commission
Pamela	Mount	Councilwoman	Lawrence Township
Les	Varga	Director	Plainsboro Township Planning and Zoning
Pat	Ward	Coordinator of Community Development	West Windsor Township

Counties			
Donna	Lewis	Director	Mercer County Planning Department
Tony	Gambilonghi	Supervising Planner for Transportation	Middlesex County Department of Planning
George	Ververides	Director	Middlesex County Department of Planning
Bob	Bzik	Director of Planning	Somerset County Planning Division
Walter	Lane	Principal Planner	Somerset County Planning Division

Metropolitan Planning Organizations			
Jesse	Buerk	Transportation Planner	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Zoe	Neaderland	Manager, Transp. Safety & Congestion Mgmt.	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Don	Shanis	Deputy Executive Director	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Amy	Magnuson	Principal Planner, Subregional Liaison	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

State Departments			
Danielle	Graves	Project Engineer	NJ Department of Transportation Bureau of Statewide Planning
Jim	Lewis	Manager	NJ Department of Transportation Bureau of Statewide Planning
Tom	Clark	Regional Manager, Gov. & Community Relations	NJ Transit
Tom	Marchwinski	Director of Systems Planning	NJ Transit

Other			
Jay	Corbalis	Policy Analyst	NJ Future
Bill	Neary	Executive Director	Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc.
Lonnie	Weiss	Consultant	Weiss Consulting

1. Welcome and Opening

Don Shanis, Deputy Executive Director, DVRPC, welcomed participants and thanked everyone for attending. Mr. Shanis then turned it over to Lonnie Weiss of Weiss Consulting, who facilitated the meeting. Ms. Weiss welcomed everyone. She stated that the group was charged with developing and agreeing on concrete recommendations about changes to the structure and function of the Forum that will increase its impact. She said the goal was to generate ownership of the group's shared context, challenges, and opportunities, as well as a renewed sense of optimism to fuel actions that will benefit the region. One of the main frustrations in the past has been the perceived lack of

action, so the group was asked to focus on thinking about ways to take action, as well as how and why these actions will help. After reviewing these desired outcomes, the group did a quick round of introductions.

2. Shared Context Work

The group participated in a discussion of ground rules for the day's session, followed by a review of the agenda. Ms. Weiss discussed the importance of establishing a shared context, especially when dealing with such a complex region and set of issues. The group then broke up into three smaller groups to develop short "skit-lets" to address issues related to the themes of transportation, land use, and relationships in Central Jersey. Each group was assigned one of these themes. Many issues with long histories were discussed under each theme, including: Penns Neck, Route 92, Route 1, I-95 to I-287 connection, BRT, 206 Bypass, and East-West Connections under Transportation; Coordination among municipalities, Green Acres, Density, Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), Quakerbridge Mall Expansion, Merrill Lynch, and COAH under Land Use; and Financing, the Mayors Coalition, State Regulatory Environment, Economic Development Relationships, and the Governor's Economic Team under Relationships. The "skit-lets" were a light-hearted and fun way to recognize some of the past frustrations faced by Central Jersey, in order to learn from the past, let it go, and move on to solutions.

3. Survey Input from CJTF Membership

Jesse Buerk, Transportation Planner, DVRPC, provided a brief overview of the results of the online survey of Forum members, which received over 100 responses. A brief report of summary charts, and a more extensive document with the complete survey results were distributed to the group. Mr. Buerk thanked all those who participated.

He reviewed the results of each question. Question 1 revealed that a large number of responses came from municipal representatives (about 30%). Questions 2 and 3 asked about the reasons people did or did not attend Forum meetings. Most said they attend to find out what is happening in the region (70%), to help shape what will happen in the Route 1 corridor (62%), or to hear about a specific issue or presentation (49%). Of those who did not attend regularly, the primary reasons were that they were too busy (47%), other reasons (40%), or because the Forum engages in too much talk and not enough action (33%). Question 4 asked which items would make the Forum more effective. Three items received the majority of the votes: Provide more support for municipalities interested in advancing an integrated transportation and land use vision for the corridor (50%); Develop action teams to advance the region's goals (47%); and Take more actions as a group, such as writing letters or issuing press releases (40%). Question 5 asked which action teams were the most important to initiate, if forming action teams emerged as a high priority. A number of action teams were supported, including: Getting Route 1 Bus Rapid Transit, with a focus on what can be done to complement NJ Transit's efforts (51%); Advancing planning and zoning to allow and promote mixed use centers (39%); Completing road improvements along Route 1 (32%); Pursuing funding sources for agreed-upon infrastructure (32%); Identifying acceptable regional action items (31%); and Refining the Route 1 Regional Growth Strategy (Rt1RGS) Implementation agenda and measuring attainment of actions (26%). Question 6 asked which level of involvement people would feel comfortable with as we move ahead to advance shared regional goals. Respondents overwhelmingly supported continuing to

attend Forum meetings (85%) and participating in one or more action teams (68%). Mr. Buerk pointed out that many excellent comments were included in the longer handout summarizing the survey. He said that the survey was successful in providing some interesting perspectives to consider.

4. Developing Recommendations

Before breaking up into smaller groups to develop recommendations, Ms. Weiss asked the group to consider what it means for the Forum to take more action. How would decisions be made concerning when, how, what, by whom, and how often to take action? What else can the Forum do to have more effect, in addition to forming action teams, writing letters or press releases, and exchanging information? She asked the group to develop both short-term and long-term recommendations, with a slightly greater emphasis on short-term solutions. The goal, she said, is to add the ability to take action in a unified way to the existing strengths of the Forum. The group divided up into three smaller groups, then reconvened to share their conclusions.

Group One took the approach of establishing key principles and organizing concepts to guide decision-making. The most important principle, in their opinion, was that decisions should always be oriented toward regional goals. The group suggested using matrices that would categorize ideas for action according to: North/South and East-West; short-term and long-term; transit, road, or pedestrian/bicyclist improvements; and major projects and smaller ones. These matrices could be used to organize, select, and prioritize items for action. The group also said that NJTPA should play a larger role in the Forum.

Group Two began by considering what would be lost if the Forum (as it is now) were to disappear. The group felt that the Forum provides resources (such as research) that are extremely valuable to municipalities. In addition, the Forum is useful for information exchange, face time, and keeping towns in the loop about regional projects. The group made the following recommendations about the structure and function of action teams: Each action team should have its own chair and co-chair, who would also be on the Forum Steering Committee; there should not be more than five action teams; they should have deadlines or milestones; they should address problems at a doable level; action team products and contact information should be accessible on the Forum website (hosted by DVRPC, with a link also on the NJTPA website); and action teams should draw in high-level actors and a mix of key stakeholders. Other recommendations were that the full Forum should meet less frequently, perhaps only twice a year. The Forum should also do more to get the Governor's office involved. The group felt that an official voting structure for the full Forum was not necessary, because in their proposed structure, voting would occur within the action teams, which would report back to the full Forum. The group also suggested that the full Forum should be co-chaired by DVRPC and NJTPA.

Group Three focused on structural issues. Like the other groups, they felt that maintaining a regional approach was critical, especially across the two MPOs. They stressed that the two MPOs should work together more. They suggested that action teams could go deep into a specific issue, then present recommendations to the full Forum for a vote. Open discussions in the full Forum would also be important, in addition to the voting structure. The group also felt it would be important for the action teams to develop short, digestible, informative products that could be used to reach out to higher

levels. In discussing what it means to participate in the Forum, the group proposed offering major matters (for example, the BRT) up for municipalities and others to sign onto, or otherwise endorse, with the idea that proving the existence of a supporting constituency for major projects would help them advance. The group felt that municipalities should take on greater ownership of the Forum, by participating in action teams and the Forum Steering Committee. The group suggested that the Forum needs to become more of an advocacy group. In order to advocate as a region, they felt there would have to be some sort of voting structure. The group also felt that the Forum should be careful not to let the action teams become divisive.

The work group discussed the various recommendations of the smaller groups. One concern about voting was that the voting body should be composed primarily of municipal and county representatives, if the Forum is to speak for them. Several participants emphasized the necessity for a balanced, standardized voting structure, that would not depend on who happened to attend a particular Forum meeting and that could not be overwhelmed by any one interest. Many felt that the endorsement of the full Forum would be an essential tool to help get things done and convince decision-makers to take action. The mayor's coalition was cited as proving that this unified advocacy approach can succeed. There was agreement that a back and forth dialogue between the action teams and the full Forum, with the end result of a group endorsement, was necessary. The goal should be to achieve buy-in from the decision-makers that are able to make things happen (such as mayors).

5. Next Steps and Closing

Ms. Weiss wrapped up the session by reviewing some of the key issues. She talked about the importance of the regional approach, and about strategic levels of coordination and communication. These levels include the MPO, County, and Municipal levels. Communication and coordination between and among these three levels is crucial. There's also a strong desire for the two MPOs to work together more.

Mr. Shanis suggested that the action teams would be charged with selling solutions, which would include the responsibility to involve the right people in the process. There was broad agreement that maintaining a regional approach was critical, that there should be a connection between action teams and the steering committee, and that action teams should report to the full Forum. Details of how a voting structure could be achieved will still need to be resolved, but the idea of having certain established voting members received support from the group. Criteria for the development and prioritization of action teams would also be important. Suggested criteria included: immediate need, regional impact, and ability to implement.

Jay Corbalis, Policy Analyst, NJ Future, provided a summary of how the group's thinking seemed to have coalesced. The Forum would assign action teams, which would investigate an issue in depth, then report back to the full Forum with recommendations. The Forum would discuss the issue and ask for more information, or, if a suitable milestone had been reached, vote on a specific action or set of actions to take. The action team could then proceed, with the endorsement of the Forum as a tool to help win buy-in from the key decision-makers needed to get things done. Action teams would be expected to report back to the Forum with their progress.

A voting structure concept will be circulated for refinement within the group, and will be presented to the full Forum for further consideration. It was suggested that the Rt1RGS could be used to help form a basis for choosing action teams. Jim Lewis, Manager, NJDOT Bureau of Statewide Planning, said that he's hopeful the Rt1RGS report would be ready in time for the July 16th meeting of the Forum. Several attendees said they hoped they could be provided copies of the Rt1RGS report in advance of the upcoming meeting.

Ms. Weiss thanked all the participants, and commended them for rising above the intersection-level of detail to consider the big picture. Pam Mount, Councilwoman, Lawrence Township; Bill Neary, Executive Director, Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc.; and Theodore Chase, Councilman, Franklin Township Council & Planning Board, volunteered to present the group's recommendations to the full Forum at the meeting on the 16th.

DVRPC fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. DVRPC's website may be translated into Spanish, Russian, and Traditional Chinese online by visiting www.dvrpc.org. Publications and other public documents can be made available in alternative languages or formats, if requested. For more information, please call (215) 238-2871.