

The next meeting of the Central Jersey Transportation Forum will be on
Tuesday, July 26th at 9:00 AM
Sarnoff Corporation - 201 Washington Road, West Windsor, New Jersey

DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Highlights of the Central Jersey Transportation Forum Meeting of February 10, 2005

Attendees (85):

Name	Organization
Richard Amodei	STV Incorporated
Rosemarie Anderson	DVRPC
Morteza Ansari	Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc.
John Araneo	French and Parrello Associates, P.A.
Brent Barnes	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Martin Bierbaum	The College of New Jersey
Arnie Bloch	Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, Inc.
Dianne Brake	Regional Planning Partnership
Sandra Brillhart	Greater Mercer TMA
Peter Cantu	Plainsboro Township & Keep Middlesex Moving
Bruce Carnall	Hopewell Township
Mike Celentana	New Jersey Department of Transportation
William Cesanek	Camp, Dresser & McKee
Tom Clark	NJ Transit
Edward Cohen	Township of East Brunswick
Paul Cohn	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Mike Collins	New Jersey Economic Development Authority
Jane Darcy	Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates
Stephen Decter	West Windsor Township
Elizabeth Donahue	Lawrence Township
Meghan Fehlig	Parsons Brinkerhoff
Michele Fisher	Office of Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein
Tony Gambilonghi	Middlesex County
Tracie Gelbstein	NJ Department of Community Affairs, Office of Smart Growth
Hamid Ghadimy	NJ Turnpike Authority
Basil Giletto	A-1 Limousine Corporate Offices
Gail Gimbel	DMJM + Harris
James Goveia	US Department of Transportation
Danielle Graves	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Pamela Hersh	Princeton University

Jim Hess	Regional Planning Partnership
Shing-Fu Hsueh	West Windsor Township
Martin Hull	Michael Baker & Associates, Inc.
Howard Immordino	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Jack Kanarek	NJ Transit
Dennis Keck	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Arlene Kemp	Hopewell Township
Barry Keppard	Greater Mercer TMA
Miki Krakauer	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Jack Kugler	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Walter Lane	Somerset County
Matthew Lawson	Mercer County
Joung Lee	Federal Highway Administration
Donna Lewis	Mercer County
Jim Lewis	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Bruce Looloian	The Advance Realty Group
John Manzoni	STV Incorporated
Christopher Marion	West Windsor Township
Craig Marshall	South Brunswick Township
Alison Miller	West Windsor Township
Zoe Neaderland	DVRPC
Bill Neary	East Brunswick Township
Damien Newton	Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Daniel O'Connell	NJ State Legislative Board/United Transportation Union
Peter Palmer	Somerset County
David Parris	Penns Neck Community
Tushar Patel	URS Corporation
Robert Patten	Hightstown Borough
Denise Peck	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Stan Platt	DVRPC
Eric Powers	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Pete Rayner	Greater Mercer TMA
Marvin Reed	Princeton Regional Planning Board
Ron Reinhardt	Transit Center
Howard Rosen	Transportation Consulting
Tony Sabidussi	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Roger Sager	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Walter Schmidlin	Sarnoff Corporation
Paul Schneider	New Jersey Department of Transportation
James Schwarzwald	NJ Transit
Charles Scott	NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection, Historic Preservation Office
Don Shanis	DVRPC
Bob Sheehan	Plainsboro Township
Scott Shields	Bristol-Myers Squibb Company
Michael Tayyabkhan	Community Without Walls, Inc.
Sue Tilden	Heyer, Gruel & Associates
Ron Tindall	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

Gary Toth	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Lester Varga	Hunterdon County Planning Board
Herman Volk	NJ Department of Community Affairs, Office of Smart Growth
Pat Ward	West Windsor Township
Kathy Werth	Princeton Junction Communities
Louise Wilson	Montgomery Township
Bob Wolfe	Princeton Forrestal Center
Jim Yeager	Michael Baker & Associates, Inc.

Overview

This meeting of the Central Jersey Transportation Forum focused on Smart Growth in a variety of ways. It included a presentation by Dennis Keck, Assistant Commissioner of Planning and Development for NJDOT, specifically on this subject. Other agenda items focused on the Route 1 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study and east/west corridor planning in the Forum area, both of which relate to Smart Growth. There were also several brief reports and updates to facilitate coordination among the many governmental bodies and other participants of the Forum.

1. Introduction of Attendees

Mr. Keck opened the meeting. He explained that John Coscia, Executive Director of DVPRC, was ill and sent his regrets. Forum participants introduced themselves.

2. July Meeting Highlights

Mr. Keck asked for amendments to the highlights of the November 4, 2004 Forum meeting. The highlights as distributed in the meeting folders were accepted without further changes.

3. Route 1 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study

Jack Kanarek, Senior Director of Project Development for NJ Transit, introduced their consultant Rich Amodei, Vice-president of STV Incorporated. Mr. Amodei provided an update on the Route 1 BRT Study. The primary focus of his presentation was the proposed BRT route configurations and services. He noted that there would be two-way service on both sides of Route 1. There are some delicacies about how service would cross through a residential area on the north side. There would be two to three new structures over Route 1. The BRT would replace some existing services and result in some changes to existing bus

service. He also spoke about new feeder routes that would serve the BRT. This BRT study is being coordinated with a similar idea in New Brunswick.

There was discussion about how the study could incorporate ways to maintain the potential for a BRT in the future in the event that there is not sufficient funding forthcoming. The main recommendation was to secure rights-of-way and if possible start incrementally with bus use of the most effective segments.

Peter Cantu, Mayor of Plainsboro, asked about how municipalities might start coordinating their land use decisions with the BRT. Shing-Fu Hsueh, Mayor of West Windsor, said they have started doing this, for example by putting conditions on the Wyeth property and the Princeton Junction redevelopment project.

Alison Miller, West Windsor Township Council Vice-President, requested that there be meetings for the general public along the proposed routes.

Tushar Patel, Senior Project Manager at URS Corporation, spoke about the modeling underway for the BRT Study. He said they are working on the 2025 No Build model, which includes the Penns Neck project, SR 92, Route 1 at Nassau Park, and a major expansion of parking at the Hamilton Station. The No Build model is expected to be run in March and then four or more Build scenarios would be run in April, coordinated with the Route 1 Smart Growth Study.

There was discussion of some specific details of the potential BRT. The BRT would likely run on eight to twelve minute headways with fares comparable to other regional services. Mr. Amodei agreed to provide maps of the proposed service to Forum members [subsequently done by e-mailing the link to the updated BRT web site, www.Route1BRT.com]

4. Transportation and Land Use Coordination in New Jersey – Smart Growth

Mr. Keck spoke about the need for prudent investments, coordination, dealing with behaviors, and constraints on resources. He gave a PowerPoint presentation titled “Smart Transportation: Integrating Smart Growth with Transportation and Land Use Planning.” It included description of how the NJ 31 project in Hunterdon County changed from a limited access freeway to a public-private partnership improving the at-grade network. He said that if that area can address transportation-land use considerations so well then surely it can be addressed for Route 1, perhaps the most studied corridor in the state and with the unusual resource of having the Forum already in place. There are approximately twenty pilot Smart Transportation studies underway statewide, one of which is the Route 1 Smart Growth Study. Mr. Keck said the new approach would involve coordination and use of tools, which can include traffic calming

where appropriate. He spoke of trying to break the cycle of the Department of Transportation having to come in over and over to deal with congestion in a financially responsible and sustainable manner. Staff distributed an additional handout, "NJDOT's Vision for the Future of Transportation: Integrated Land Use and Transportation Planning."

Gary Toth, NJDOT Director of Project Planning and Development, said it is important to have a plan so developers can work with the public sector. It was asked what would make a private commercial developer want to be involved in this approach. Mr. Keck said that providing a mix of housing options and building Smart Growth projects in an aesthetically pleasing way is beneficial for developers, citing the example of Radburn. He went on to recognize that more cooperation and support on the part of municipalities is an important aspect of making this work.

Dianne Brake, President of Regional Planning Partnership, thanked NJDOT for this shift in approach. She went on to emphasize the need for goals in terms of growth, assessment of capacity, involving transit, and incorporating context sensitive design but not at the expense of transportation functionality.

Donna Lewis, Director of Mercer County Planning Department, followed up Mr. Keck's comment about the enhanced coordination of NJDOT with the Office of Smart Growth (OSG) by asking about coordination with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Mr. Keck said the Assistant Commissioners of NJDOT and NJDEP meet regularly. One outcome is use of DEP permitting powers to implement shared goals.

Pamela Hersh, Director of Community and State Affairs for Princeton University, said that while the tools Mr. Keck had described are thrilling, the other key element is the political will of the people in the Forum and elsewhere to make these changes go forward.

5. East/West Corridors and Supporting the BRT

Don Shanis, Assistant Executive Director for Transportation Planning at DVRPC, noted that the CJTF Transportation/Land Use Atlas had been provided to participants to help provide a shared base of knowledge about the existing facilities, how they are used, programmed projects, and remaining problems in the area. He said it is provided as part of the Forum's goal of improving east-west access and can be added to and refined over time to meet the needs of participants.

Mr. Shanis noted that the Forum Steering Committee had met a couple of times since the last meeting. Through these discussions, the TMAs agreed to gather the circulation plans of Forum municipalities and analyze them together with the

MPOs and DOTs. The purpose is to help municipalities work toward more unified, effective plans for the region. He asked that municipalities provide them by March 10th so there would be results to show at the next full meeting. Sandy Brillhart, Executive Director of Greater Mercer TMA, said that the three TMAs in the Forum area were mainly just facilitating this task.

Marvin Reed, Chairman of the Master Plan Committee for the Princeton Regional Planning Board, emphasized the importance of east-west access. He said he wished the Turnpike Authority would give a definitive yes or no on SR 92, but that to him the interconnections relating to Route 1 at the local level are more important. He stressed that this fundamental roadway issue needs to be addressed, specifically regarding where to add capacity. He expressed frustration that the Forum was discussing this matter when it was his impression that this was coming about as a result of the Route 1 Smart Growth project. Danielle Graves, NJDOT Principal Engineer and manager of that project, provided clarification. She said that project has three goals: doing land use buildout analysis, preparing an economic framework for the region, and addressing transportation through coordination with the BRT and Forum. There has been one meeting so far with approximately four more to occur this year. Mayor Cantu said that gathering the circulation plans is a first step to addressing the problems Mr. Reed was describing.

Mr. Toth said he thought there was too much discussion going on and not enough decisions, and that the Forum should not have the role of recommending specific east-west corridors for improvements as part of the Route 1 Smart Growth Study. Mayor Cantu said that what Mr. Toth was hearing reflected twenty-five years of frustration. He said a new day is dawning of demonstrating regional planning initiatives and actions. Municipalities control land use and it is a good thing they are at the Forum acting responsibly. He does not think decision-making on this matter should be moved away from the Forum.

Ron Tindall, Principal Planner at NJTPA, said expecting two municipalities to coordinate on a through road is unrealistic. Mr. Toth gave the current example of the Flemington and Raritan joint planning project discussed earlier in the meeting, which was helped along with a joint planning grant. There was related discussion about the Exit 8A project, Congestion Busters, for which there had been a meeting the day before.

Mr. Shanis summarized by encouraging development of win-win solutions to adding capacity in various locations. He said Ms. Brillhart would send a letter reminding all the municipalities to send their circulation plans to the Greater Mercer TMA as a gathering point, and encouraged that any other relevant plans also be sent along.

Bob Wolfe, President of Picus Associates, said the land use map in the Atlas was out of date. He said, for example, that it doesn't show Bristol-Myers Squibb, which was built around 1980.

Ms. Hersh asked a follow-up question about the status of SR 92. Hamid Ghadimy, New Jersey Turnpike Authority, said they are working on the final EIS. Mr. Keck recognized the strong varying views of Forum members on this project. He said the Forum could spend considerable time debating the issue and would likely just end with the same five mayors for it and five against it as was summarized after the public meetings on that project.

6. Brief Reports

a) Legislative Committee Update

Mr. Wolfe explained there were two draft letters in the meeting folders for Forum discussion and approval to send. One covers reauthorization of the Transportation Trust Fund and the other property tax reform. Mr. Keck and others said they agreed with the contents and that specific edits should be provided to Mr. Wolfe or DVRPC Senior Planner Zoe Neaderland. Ms. Hersh said that the letters should go not just to the Governor and Legislature, but also to candidates for Governor to get people talking about these matters. There was some concern about taking this approach in a formal matter, with the conclusion that it would be appropriate for Ms. Hersh to forward the letter to them. It was also noted that the Alliance for Action had met earlier that week and also supported reauthorization of the Trust Fund.

b) Cross-acceptance

Tracie Gelbstein, Assistant Counsel for OSG, provided an update on the State Plan. She said they have received a final report from Middlesex County and they are working with Mercer County. Meetings with county planning staffs will start at the end of February. She said there would be twenty-one county meetings through the spring and summer to reach agreements on cross-acceptance. This will result in a statement of agreements and disagreements that will be adopted into the State Plan. She emphasized that counties and municipalities should participate. The Plan is important and also there will be incentives for following it, such as funding and technical assistance.

c) Draft New Jersey Statewide Goods Movement Plan

Eric Powers, Principal Planner at NJDOT, spoke about work on the first statewide goods movement plan. He said much of the research and analysis is done and outreach meetings had been held on the draft Goods Movement

Plan. NJDOT is continuing to work with MPOs and other stakeholders. He would be willing to discuss how to bring more final results back to the Forum, following up “Project Information Sheet Volume 3” included in the folders. Ms. Miller noted how the Forum brings together many issues discussed at the state level with the result that the meeting had covered increasing mixed uses and shifting freight to off-hours when people are trying to sleep. She asked that the Goods Movement Plan maximize coordination of freight with quality of life. Sue Tilden, Heyer and Gruel, said communities don’t necessarily want to accommodate tractor-trailers to supply their CMS. The need may be to break the transportation chain with a transfer to smaller size trucks. Mr. Toth reinforced that, saying how you design streets directs how they are used. Peter Palmer, Freeholder for Somerset County, noted that any action such as further breaking the supply chain raises the price of goods. Peter Rayner, member of the Greater Mercer TMA Board, noted that while there was considerable interest being displayed, few municipalities showed up to meetings when the Forum had an active Goods Movement Committee. In closing, Mr. Keck noted that discussing these matters is a step forward, as municipalities have often made decisions without thinking about these matters.

d) Final Penns Neck Area EIS

Tony Sabidussi, NJDOT Environmental Program Resources, said the Final Penns Neck Area EIS is almost done. The comment period will end February 14th and no comments had yet been received. He expressed appreciation for the work of DMJM Harris, Jon Carnegie, and the Penns Neck Round Table members. Next, the report will go to FHWA for a Record of Decision, which would end the NEPA process. Design can start after that, then acquisition of right of way, and finally construction, which is at least three years away.

e) Bi-annual Planned Projects Status Report

Mr. Shanis noted that pages one and two cover new material in response to the Forum’s focus on east-west access. There was some confusion about the text on page 1 relating to the NJ Turnpike interchange 8A-9 study. This project is listed in the Projects Removed table as not progressing to final design. The language had come directly from the Turnpike Authority and staff from there explained that study was tabled but the new study that has been in the press for interchanges 6 – 8A was added in the Projects Added table further down that page.

7. Dialogue

Mr. Reed said that Princeton Healthcare Systems is definitely moving from its downtown site. The Princeton Regional Planning Board is recommending the new site be located on a transit system.

Mayor Cantu said there had recently been a press release approving pilot programs for Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), which is a very positive step. Louise Wilson, Mayor of Montgomery Township, said they are looking forward to starting work on their project and thanked Mayor Cantu and others for their decades of work on the issue.

Mr. Keck said he wanted to recognize the role of federal partners in planning and introduced Joung Lee from FHWA-NJ Division. Mr. Lee gave a brief update on the status of SafeTEA. He said President Bush had originally wanted to reduce transportation funding but recognized how important it is and increased funding in comparison to TEA-21. Tom Clark, Regional Manager for NJ Transit, suggested a letter of support for reauthorizing the transportation bill might be appropriate for the next meeting.

Next Steps

It was agreed that the next meeting date would be distributed by DVRPC to Forum participants.