

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CENTRAL JERSEY TRANSPORTATION FORUM MEETING OF JULY 26, 2005

Attendees (89):

Name	Organization
Chris Altomari	Stony Brook - Millstone Watershed Association
Richard Amodei	STV Incorporated
Morteza Ansari	Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc.
John Araneo	French and Parrello Associates, P.A.
Wendy Benchley	Princeton Borough
Martin Bierbaum	Municipal Land Use Center
Dianne Brake	Regional Planning Partnership
Sandra Brillhart	Greater Mercer TMA
Robert Bzik	Somerset County
Peter Cantu	Plainsboro Township & Keep Middlesex Moving
Courtney Carroll	NJ Transit
Mike Collins	NJ Economic Development Authority
Susan Conlon	Berrien City /Princeton Junction
John Coscia	DVRPC
Michele Fisher	Office of Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein
Ernie Freeman	Plainsboro Township
Tracie Gelbstein	NJ Department of Community Affairs
Basil Giletto	A-1 Limousine Corporate Offices
James Goveia	US Department of Transportation
Danielle Graves	NJ Department of Transportation
Linda Geevers	West Windsor Township
Robert Grimm	NJ Turnpike Authority
William Hearon	Princeton Township
Pam Hersh	Princeton University
James Hess	DMJM + Harris
Steven Hildner	Office of Congressmen Rush Holt
Rae Hutton	NJ Transit
Howard Immordino	NJ Department of Transportation
Jack Kanarek	NJ Transit
Dennis Keck	NJ Department of Transportation
Barry Keppard	Greater Mercer TMA
Katherine Kish	Princeton Future/Princeton Reg'l Chamber of Commerce
Heidi Kleinman	West Windsor Township
Miki Krakauer	NJ Department of Transportation
Irene Kravetz	NJ Transit
Walter Lane	Somerset County
Matthew Lawson	Mercer County
Joung Lee	Federal Highway Administration
Donna Lewis	Mercer County
Jerome Lutin	NJ Transit
Bradford Lyon	Hopewell Borough
Alan Maiman	NJ Transit
John Manzoni	STV Incorporated

Thomas Marchwinski	NJ Transit
Robert Marshall	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Craig Marshall	South Brunswick Township
Karen McClintock	Office of Congressman Mike Ferguson
Alison Miller	Friends of W. Windsor Open Space
Janice Mironov	East Windsor Township
Regina Moore	DVRPC
Pamela Mount	Lawrence Township
Zoe Neaderland	DVRPC
Bill Neary	East Brunswick Township & KMM
David Nettles	Hopewell Borough
Daniel O'Connell	NJ State Legislative Board/United Transportation Union
Peter Palmer	NJTPA, Somerset County
Peter Palmer	Somerset County
James Parvesse	West Windsor Township
Tushar Patel	URS Corporation
Robert Patten	Hightstown Borough
Stan Platt	DVRPC
Brian Quinn	NJ Department of Environmental Protection
Pete Rayner	Greater Mercer TMA
Marvin Reed	Princeton Regional Planning Board
Rebecca Reyes-Alicea	Federal Transit Administration
Elizabeth Robbins	New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Financing
Howard Rosen	Transportation Consulting
Mack Rugg	CDM Consulting
Roger Sager	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
David Schellinger	URS Corporation
Walter Schmidlin	Sarnoff Corporation
David Schutze	N. T. Callaway Real Estate Broker
James Schwarzwaldner	NJ Transit
Charles Scott	NJ Department of Environmental Protection
Don Shanis	DVRPC
Sandra Shapiro	West Windsor Citizens for Transportation Alternatives
Scott Shields	Bristol-Myers Squibb Company
Candy Snyder	DVRPC
Lee Solow	Princeton Regional Planning Board
Linda Spalinski	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Michael Tayyabkhan	Community Without Walls, Inc.
Sue Tilden	Heyer, Gruel & Associates
Ron Tindall	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
George Verwerides	Middlesex County
Herman Volk	NJ Department of Community Affairs
Pat Ward	West Windsor Township
Louise Wilson	Montgomery Township
Bob Wolfe	Picus Associates
Jim Yeager	Michael Baker & Associates, Inc.

Overview

This well-attended meeting covered a packed agenda. There was extensive discussion of the findings of the Route 1 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study. There were presentations on the circulation plans of all Forum municipalities with best practices. The circulation plans will be lined up for a few existing east-west corridors at a time to develop regional packages of recommendations. A first selection of corridors was discussed. There was an update on the Route 1 Regional Smart Growth Strategy and its coordination with the Forum. There were also brief information items on Cross-acceptance, an Integrated Land Use and Transportation Planning Project, and the Transload Facility in Hillsborough.

1. Introductions

Forum participants introduced themselves.

2. Approval of February Meeting Highlights

Mr. Coscia, Executive Director of Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), gave his regrets again for having had to miss the last meeting. He said that while he hoped there was just some miscommunication in the meeting highlights about what Gary Toth had said, he would disagree with those remarks. He asked for amendments to the highlights of the February 10, 2005 Forum meeting. There were no comments and the highlights were adopted.

3. Route 1 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study Findings

Jack Kanarek, NJ Transit Senior Director of Project Development, provided an overview and introduced consultant Rich Amodei, Vice President of STV Incorporated. As Mr. Amodei and modeling consultant David Schellinger, Manager at URS Corporation, went through their PowerPoint presentations, there were many questions. An expanded version of their PowerPoint is being distributed by mail to the Forum with the additional tables that were pulled up during the discussions. It was noted that analysis of the DINKY options is still being finalized and those results will be provided to the Forum in the future. Questions to the presenters are summarized by topic below:

Alignment

- How were the discussions about the potential for a South Brunswick train station dealt with? A dashed line is shown on the graphics but the possible extension of the BRT to that potential station is not included in analysis.
- How were the West Trenton Line Project and related TOD efforts incorporated? They were not modeled in the interest of being conservative. Bob Bzik, Director of Somerset County Planning Division, requested that they be considered.
- Peter Palmer, NJTPA Chair and Somerset County Freeholder, requested that there be consideration for co-locating a BRT and West Trenton Line park and ride lot.
- How will the 9,000 square feet of approved development at Forrestal Center be served? There will be a feeder bus.

- How big would the Park and Ride lots be? They would be sized to fit projected use, with the exception that the modeling did not include expanding existing park and ride lots, such as at Princeton Junction.
- There are major new residential developments proposed or underway that are ignored in the BRT alignment; it only focuses on employers and park and ride locations. How can this be addressed? NJ Transit has met and will meet again with each municipality. Municipalities need to review the alignment and provide input. Wendy Benchley, Princeton Borough Council Member, asked if Mr. Coscia would write a letter emphasizing that and he said he would do that. It was noted that the aerial map poster of the alignment and feeder routes is available to municipalities and counties upon request.

Travel Times

- What will be the travel times and time savings of the BRT? In terms of travel times, it is assumed that an aggressive but available set of techniques would be in places such as vehicles that accelerate quickly and that have priority at lights. Ms. Benchley said that the whole logic of the system is time-savings, so it is essential to provide readily understandable answers to how much time would be saved on specific trips and by implementing the system as a whole.
- What would the vehicles be like and approximately how many would be involved? They would be attractive and designed to quickly let passengers on and off. There was an estimate that there might be on the order of 90 vehicles involved for the 28 mile BRT system.

Policy, Finance, and Land Use

- What assumptions were made about energy prices? They were assumed to track with inflation. Mr. Coscia noted that a sensitivity analysis could be done.
- What do the dollar figures in the tables represent? They are 2004 dollars and do not include debt service.
- Have they assessed whether the project is in the ballpark of requirements for federal funding? This assessment is underway but the federal New Starts program is not the definite funding source. Some other ideas mentioned were bonding and discussing whether the mainly road parts of the project might be funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Joung Lee, Transportation Planner at FHWA, said he couldn't think off-hand of precedent for significant BRT involvement. He asked whether any such proposed new facilities would also serve High Occupancy Vehicles. The response was they had not thought about it that way, but Mr. Kanarek noted that it is important to be open, inventive, and to include the private sector. Jim Schwarzwald, NJ Transit Manager of Area Studies, emphasized the importance of thinking about phasing implementation.
- How have other BRT projects been funded, such as in Pittsburgh? That project was funded through a mix of sources.
- What are the induced changes in travel and land use resulting from the BRT? This has not really been assessed yet. It will be partially covered by the Route 1 Regional Smart Growth Strategy modeling. Dianne Brake, President of Regional Planning Partnership, stressed the need to consider and plan for the changes in land use that need to happen to make the BRT a success.

In summary, Mr. Kanarek said that NJ Transit is not yet recommending a course of advancement and the specifics of the project are still open for discussion. He used the

analogy of viewing the project from the air, noting that one might think of the older analysis as at a 50,000' level, this effort as wrapping up a 30,000' view, and that future work would be nearer and in more detail. Next steps include meeting with each municipality, public open houses, and finishing the technical work. Mr. Coscia emphasized the importance of getting something on the ground as quickly as possible.

4. How Municipalities Can Improve East-West Access and Support the BRT

a) Matrix of circulation plans and examples of best practice sections

Barry Keppard, Transportation Planner at Greater Mercer TMA, thanked all the municipalities and counties for responding to the request for circulation elements. He noted that the three TMAs in the Forum area had done much of the work involved in this task and the Steering Committee had expressed its appreciation. He explained the overview matrix of modes and noted that sections that best demonstrate a comprehensive approach to transportation planning had all been gathered in the "Working Paper on Circulation Elements".

The work on analyzing the circulation elements resulted in several recommendations. These included creating electronic versions of all the circulation plans, and making them available to all municipalities, perhaps through a central web site. He noted that an option would be to create a Forum Technical Assistance group to assist municipalities or counties updating their circulation elements.

b) Draft priority regional east-west corridors and next steps using the plans

Zoe Neaderland, Senior Transportation Planner at DVRPC, spoke about the PowerPoint presentation, "Draft Inventory and Priority East-West Corridors (First Round)". This task is part of a holistic approach to implementing the adopted Forum Action Plan that includes:

- The transportation problems and projects database
- Tracking TIP projects for regional meaning
- These short-medium term packages of projects on existing corridors
- Developing ideas for the next generation of major projects in coordination with the Route 1 Regional Smart Growth Strategy

Ms. Neaderland said this task is a first round of mapping municipal circulation elements along with other data for a few adjoining municipalities at a time to get some regionally helpful projects funded. She asked anyone with comments to contact her. The list of corridors will be narrowed based on interest by municipalities.

Marvin Reed, Master Plan Committee Chairman of the Princeton Regional Planning Board, said that if the Central Jersey area is not going to be its own MPO then more needs to be done than the corridors task. Mr. Coscia said a major subarea study could be considered for the DVRPC work program, but it would be expensive and would have to go through the existing processes.

It was recommended to make the title of the corridors task clearer. It was clarified that the recommendations for the selected corridors would come from the circulation plans. Louise Wilson, Mayor of Montgomery Township, praised how Somerset

County had worked with stakeholders in developing reconstruction projects along CR 518, one possible corridor. Ms. Brake said the region is beginning to think of itself as a region and this needs to continue.

c) Survey and definitions of policy-based transportation strategies

Mr. Coscia explained the survey included in the folders and encouraged all to fill it out and hand or mail it in.

d) A few innovative ways to finance transportation projects

Mr. Coscia and Bob Wolfe, Chairman of the Legislative Committee, spoke briefly about "A Few Innovative Ways to Fund Transportation Projects". They noted that the Transportation Enhancement District (TED) bill represents an option for funding the BRT. Bill S 1593 has been sitting in the Senate Transportation Committee. The Legislative Committee and Forum could work on helping it move forward. Donna Lewis, Director of Mercer County Planning Department, clarified that not every municipality in such a district would have to support it; the county would be the executive body.

The discussion on how to help the bill move forward shifted to defining a priority legislative task for the Forum. Several people said there seems to be wavering on reauthorization of the Transportation Trust Fund and that securing funding is the most important task. There was agreement that staff would research which major TIP projects for 2007 and 2008 would not be funded for each county if the Trust Fund were not reauthorized. This list is to be sent in a letter with information about the Forum to each candidate for governor. Dan O'Connell, New Jersey Legislative Director for the United Transportation Union, started the discussion about how just letters are not enough and suggested taking reporters to key sites where work would be delayed. Mr. Coscia offered that DVRPC could prepare a press release to all newspapers, send it, and provide it to Forum members for their use.

5. Route 1 Smart Growth Study

Jim Lewis, Manager of the NJDOT Bureau of Statewide Planning, introduced the project manager, NJDOT Principal Engineer Danielle Graves. Given that the meeting was running late, she briefly summarized a PowerPoint presentation, "Smart Transportation: Integrating Smart Growth with Transportation Planning." It was agreed that the slides would be reproduced with only one per page and that Forum participants not in the NJDOT study committee would be provided access to materials. They will be mailed out and posted on the Forum pages of the DVRPC web site.

Mr. Coscia started the discussion noting that important work will be coming from the Smart Growth Study. He recommended that the Forum help shape the future scenarios that will then be modeled and asked whether the State Plan would be a scenario. Dennis Keck, NJDOT Assistant Commissioner of Planning and Development, responded affirmatively to both comments.

Pamela Mount, Mayor of Lawrence Township, said it is important to study airports as well as other modes given the amount of goods moving that way. Mr. Coscia noted that

DVRPC does regional airport planning for four states and staff could be invited to give an update.

Ron Tindall, Principal Planner for North Jersey Transportation Authority, complemented the work done so far and especially the economic analysis done by consultant Michael Gallis & Associates. He said a strong finding so far is there is too much land zoned for offices. A BRT would help bring workers in and move them around. He requested that all members of the Forum be invited to the next Smart Growth Strategy meeting. Mr. Keck agreed.

6. Brief Reports

a) Cross-acceptance

Tracie Gelbstein, Deputy Counsel of the NJ Department of Community Affairs – Office of Smart Growth, noted they had just launched a \$2.295 million Smart Future Planning Grant Program. More information is available at www.NJSmartGrowth.com. She highlighted that applications are due September 15th. The schedule for Cross-acceptance has been updated and is also available at their web site. It would result in State Planning Commission final adoption in December, 2006.

b) Integrated Land Use and Transportation Planning Project

Martin Bierbaum, Executive Director of the Municipal Land Use Center of the College of New Jersey, briefly explained the project. It will result in a series of workshops oriented toward municipalities and a final event drawing conclusions. The Forum will be kept informed.

c) Transload Facility

Mr. Coscia noted that the Forum does not usually get into specific development proposals, but a letter he had received from Mr. Reed dated June 20, 2005 requested discussion of the Hillsborough Transload Facility at Veterans Industrial Park (Hillsborough Depot) and seemed to raise relevant issues. It involves the leasing of an underused Veterans Administration facility with rail access by the Industrial Realty Group (IRG) for warehousing, shipping of less than truckload goods, light manufacturing and office uses. A representative from IRG had been invited. They sent a fact sheet that was distributed.

Mr. Reed said he thinks this is a real issue rather than a theoretical one and it is what the Forum should address. He said that because not enough had been done to increase capacity on east-west roads, all the trucks would use US 206. Princeton Township and Borough have passed resolutions opposing the project.

Mr. Bzik expressed concern that municipalities may be jumping to conclusions in response to sound bites. The NJTPA has done recent freight modeling that showed the main truck movement is toward the north rather than the south (towards Princeton) due to proximity of the interstate system and location of major retail, warehouse/distribution, and manufacturing facilities. Somerset County has received

a grant to do an intermodal study of at-grade crossings and two pilot areas of coordinated value-adding land use and transportation, one of which will include the Veterans Industrial Park area. The RFP is out this summer with a consultant expected to be on board this fall. Mr. Bzik offered to report back to the Forum once some work has been accomplished. He said he thought this would be a more useful way to address the matter than having the Transload Facility developer speak. The IRG fact sheet stated that Orth-Rogers & Associates has been hired to do a traffic and transportation study for the project. Mr. Bzik said the County would include but not rely upon that work.

Other discussion covered:

- The 1996 NJDOT Origin-Destination (O-D) study of truck traffic on US 206 and the one the year before on routes 202/31.
- Mayor Wilson said Montgomery also opposes the project. She said getting facts on the table is essential even though the enhanced federal lease exempts the developer from local regulations.
- Miki Krakauer, Administrative Analyst at NJDOT, asked how the 1.25 million square feet of the Veterans Industrial Park site compares with the warehousing facilities in the vicinity of Exit 8A of the NJ Turnpike. George Ververides, Director of Middlesex County Department of Planning, said any one warehouse there might be 2-3 million square feet.
- There has been and already is warehousing and shipping at the site.
- IRG was working with a short line rail hauler and had applied for a \$2.2 million grant to upgrade rail access. That application has been withdrawn.
- Bill Hearon, Princeton Township Committee Member, said there was not enough action and he wants a study. He said the area is part of a global network but needs more infrastructure to deal with it.

d) Progress on Forum action Plan

Mr. Coscia noted the folders also included a Progress Report on the Forum Action Plan and response from the Governor regarding the Forum's letter on reauthorization of the Transportation Trust Fund.

7. Dialogue

There was little dialogue as it was getting late.

Next Steps

It was agreed that DVRPC would notify Forum participants of the date of the next meeting with the mailing of follow-up materials.