

ONE PAGE OVERVIEW
Central Jersey Transportation Forum
February 4th, 2016 Meeting

Welcome and Introductions

There were over 48 participants, including representatives from ten municipalities, three counties, two MPOs, and various agencies and organizations (for-profit and non-profit). Monica Weaver, Provost of the James Kerney Campus of Mercer County Community College, welcomed everyone to Trenton. Diana Rodgers, Acting Director of the City of Trenton Division of Housing and Economic Development, spoke about the importance of transportation to the economic prosperity of Trenton and all of New Jersey.

Rail Projects in and Affecting Central Jersey

- Program Manager Ed Fang and Senior Director Tom Martin of NJ Transit's Capital Planning and Programs staff described the Delco-Lead/County Yard Project in North Brunswick and New Brunswick:
 - This \$371 million project will enhance the efficiency and reliability of train service in New Jersey.
 - Improvements will include expansion of the Delco Lead and County Yard tracks to increase rail equipment storage and enhance operations, especially in the event of severe weather.
 - Mr. Martin emphasized the importance of regional coordination and support.
- Drew Galloway, Deputy Chief of Infrastructure Planning and Performance at Amtrak, discussed:
 - \$450 million project to install high-speed rail on the section between Trenton and New Brunswick
 - Gateway Program to rehabilitate infrastructure along the NEC, expand capacity, and improve resiliency; this large program includes the Hudson Tunnels into Manhattan
 - Plans to procure high speed trains as the Acela trains end their expected lifespan, the NEC five-year capital investment plan, and other critical safety and infrastructure improvement projects
 - Positive Train Control was completed in 2015 between DC and NYC, which will help prevent crashes.
- Amishi Castelli, NEC Future Environmental Lead for the Federal Railroad Administration, presented an overview of the multi-agency NEC Future project to date:
 - Developing a comprehensive plan to, at a minimum, bring the NEC to a state of good repair (the no-action alternative); the action alternatives are Maintain, Grow, and Expand
 - Next steps include identifying a Preferred Alternative and releasing the Tier 1 Final EIS in the fall of 2016.

Federal Funding Update and Discussion of Funding Non-Traditional Transit

FHWA-NJ Planning and Environment Team Leader Calvin Edghill shared an overview of the FAST Act, the five-year transportation funding bill that was the first long-term authorization act in a decade.

Forum Business

Jesse Buerk, Senior Transportation Planner at DVRPC, shared a draft update of the *Planned Projects Status Report*, which provides information about projects in Central Jersey listed in the Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) of DVRPC and NJTPA. This edition includes a new map focused on the US 130 corridor. A summary of major land development projects is being compiled.

Best Practices in Implementing Transportation Smart Growth

Tom Vigna, North Brunswick Township Planner and Chair of the Rt1RGS Action Team, provided an update on the effort to summarize how Central Jersey municipalities are implementing transportation smart growth. The Joint Action teams request all Forum participants, and specifically each voting member, provide additional examples.

Brief Updates and Dialogue

Jeffrey Wilkerson, Principal Planner for the City of Trenton, discussed the progress of the Trenton250 Plan and commended the mayoral administration's commitment to making the master plan operational.

**Meeting Summary
Central Jersey Transportation Forum
February 4th, 2016**

ATTENDEES: over 48 participants – Please advise if you attended but are not on the list.

Municipal Staff			
Diana	Rodgers	Acting Director	City of Trenton Division of Housing & Economic Development
Jeffrey	Wilkerson	Principal Planner	City of Trenton Division of Planning
David	Kois	Business Advocate	Hillsborough Township
James	Parvesse	Township Engineer	Lawrence Township
Gail	Smith	Engineer	Montgomery Township
Tom	Vigna	Township Planner; Chair, RT1RGS Action Team	North Brunswick Township Community Development - Division of Planning
Arthur	Lehrhaupt	Planning Board Chair	Plainsboro Township
Jenny	Crumiller	Councilwoman	Princeton
Jerry	Lutin	Planning Board Member	South Brunswick Township
Pat	Ward	Director of Community Development	West Windsor Township

Counties			
Matt	Lawson	Principal Planner	Mercer County Planning Division
Tony	Gambilonghi	Supervising Planner for Transportation	Middlesex County Office of Planning
George	Ververides	Director	Middlesex County Office of Planning
Ken	Wedeen	Principal Transportation Planner	Somerset County Planning Division

Freeholder Peter Palmer represented Somerset County and the NJTPA Board.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations			
Jesse	Buerk	Senior Transportation Planner	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Zoe	Neaderland	Manager, Transp. Safety & Congestion Mgmt.	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Justin	Neff	Intern	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Barry	Seymour	Executive Director	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Zenobia	Fields	Director, Department of Planning	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
Megan	Kelly	Principal Planner, Subregional Planning Studies	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
Peter	Palmer	Freeholder, Board Chair	Somerset County, NJTPA Board

Other Regional Bodies			
Jodee	Inscho	Director of Community Affairs	Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission
Chad	Dixson	Mobility Manager	Greater Mercer TMA
Cheryl	Kastrenakes	Executive Director	Greater Mercer TMA
Morteza	Ansari	Senior Transportation Coordinator	Keep Middlesex Moving TMA
Bill	Neary	Executive Director; Forum Chair	Keep Middlesex Moving TMA

State Departments			
Robert	Tessier	Project Specialist	NJ Department of Community Affairs, Local Planning Services
Barry	Ableman	Principal Planner	NJ Department of State, Office for Planning Advocacy
Gerard	Scharfenberger	Director	NJ Department of State, Office for Planning Advocacy

Danielle	Graves	Project Manager	NJ Department of Transportation, Bureau of Statewide Strategies
Tom	Houck	Transportation Planner	NJ Department of Transportation, Bureau of Statewide Strategies
Jim	Lewis	Manager	NJ Department of Transportation, Bureau of Statewide Strategies
Andrew	Swords	Director	NJ Department of Transportation, Division of Statewide Planning
Alison	Tarnopol	Chief, Preparedness Bureau	NJ Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness
Ed	Fang	Program Manager, Capital Planning and Programs	NJ Transit
Tom	Martin	Senior Director	NJ Transit
Matt	Safer	Senior Director of Demand Forecasting & Research	NJ Transit
Mike	Viscardi	Senior Facilities Manager	NJ Transit

Federal Agencies			
Calvin	Edghill	Planning & Environment Team Leader; Research	Federal Highway Administration, New Jersey
Amishi	Castelli	NEC Future Environmental Lead	Federal Railroad Administration

Other			
Jim	Hess	Project Manager	AECOM
Drew	Galloway	Deputy Chief, Infrastructure Planning & Performance	Amtrak
Jack	Kanarek	Senior Project Manager; Chair , Transit Action Team	Dewberry
Monica	Weaver	Provost – James Kerney Campus	Mercer County Community College
Pam	Lebeaux	NEC Future Agency and Public Outreach	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Curt	Emmich	Associate	Picus Associates
Sheldon	Sturges	Managing Director	Princeton Future
Daniel	O'Connell	NJ Legislative Director	SMART - International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

There were over 48 participants, including representatives from ten municipalities, three counties, two MPOs, and various agencies and organizations (for-profit and non-profit). Bill Neary, Forum Chair and Executive Director of Keep Middlesex Moving TMA, welcomed everyone. He introduced Monica Weaver, Provost of the James Kerney Campus of Mercer County Community College. Ms. Weaver welcomed everyone to Trenton and discussed some of MCCC's successful education programs. Diana Rodgers, Acting Director of the City of Trenton Division of Housing and Economic Development also welcomed the group, emphasizing the critical importance of transportation connections to the economic prosperity of Trenton and all of New Jersey.

Everyone introduced himself or herself.

2. **Rail Projects in and Affecting Central Jersey**

Program Manager Ed Fang and Senior Director Tom Martin of NJ Transit's Capital Planning and Programs staff gave a presentation detailing the Delco-Lead/County Yard Project. This \$371 million project will enhance the efficiency and reliability of train service in New Jersey. Mr. Fang described the three components of the project, which include:

1. Reconstruction of the existing Delco Lead track and construction of adjacent track from County Yard to North Brunswick for storage of NJ Transit trains in the event of severe weather.
2. Construction of a new service and inspection facility, crew quarters, and employee parking lot at the County Yard site for inspection and light maintenance of trains.
3. Reconstruction and expansion of the County Yard tracks to increase rail equipment storage and enhance operations.

Approximately half of the funding for the project is being covered by federal disaster relief funds. The project is currently advancing through the preliminary engineering process. At the same time, the federal NEPA approval process is proceeding with Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Section 4(f) evaluations. This will involve meeting with local municipalities including North Brunswick and New Brunswick to discuss utility coordination and the proposed project. Other reviews, including Amtrak and Conrail design reviews, and NJDEP permitting, will take place concurrently. The goal is to have thirty percent designs completed and EA approved by spring 2016. The project is expected to be advertised for construction in the fall of 2016, with all work scheduled to be completed by the middle of 2021.

Mr. Martin emphasized the importance of regional coordination and support for this complex but essential project. He asked Forum participants to stay engaged and to show their support for the project. The floor was opened to discussion, which included the following highlights:

- Peter Palmer, Somerset County Freeholder and NJTPA Board Chair, asked how the Delco-Lead/County Yard Project relates to the North Brunswick flyover project. Mr. Martin said the flyover project is a longer term project. Tom Vigna, North Brunswick Township Planner and Chair of the Rt1RGS Action Team, said that the Delco-Lead/County Yard Project would be integrated into the flyover project through the design process.
- Mr. Neary asked if the Delco-Lead/County Yard Project would require reconstructing the Howe Lane Bridge. Mr. Martin said it would not.
- Jack Kanarek, Senior Project Manager at Dewberry and Chair of the Transit Action Team, suggested that the Forum send a letter of support for the Delco-Lead/County Yard Project. Barry Seymour, Executive Director of DVRPC, asked if there was local opposition to the project. Mr. Martin said there was not local opposition, but that it is important to work together and demonstrate support for the project, so the letter would be helpful in that regard.

Drew Galloway, Deputy Chief of Infrastructure Planning and Performance at Amtrak, provided an overview of the Northeast Corridor (NEC) Gateway Program and other major projects. He began by detailing the critical and complex operational characteristics of the NEC, which carries over 150,000 daily trips and 260 million passengers annually across 546 route miles. However, much of the NEC was built in the early part of the twentieth century. It is in desperate need of rehabilitation and is also approaching the limits of its capacity.

Mr. Galloway described the Gateway Program, which includes improvements to rehabilitate and replace outdated infrastructure along the NEC, as well as expanding capacity and improving resiliency. A feasibility study and system-level design process have been completed, and a program development effort has been initiated to identify and advance specific improvements. At the same time, preliminary engineering and NEPA documentation for the Hudson Tunnel Project are in procurement. Mr. Galloway described the impacts of SuperStorm Sandy, when four of six tunnels into New York City flooded. This flooding is still causing issues today, due to saltwater intrusion, which is degrading the tunnels and their supporting systems. This issue is a major threat to rail capacity into New York City. He described the Hudson Tunnel project, which would add two new tunnels. The Hudson Yards development project has involved a great deal of coordination in a very short period of time to ensure that a major development doesn't preclude essential tunnel expansion possibilities. The Hudson Tunnel Project Study is a collaborative effort between several agencies, with FRA acting as the USDOT Federal Lead Agency, NJ Transit managing the NEPA effort, and Amtrak leading the Preliminary Engineering. At the same time, the states of New York and New Jersey, Senators Schumer and Booker, USDOT, the Port Authority of NY & NJ, Amtrak, and NJ Transit are all working together to launch the Gateway Development Corporation. This entity will manage the entire Gateway program in a holistic manner.

Mr. Galloway described the NEC five-year capital investment plan, an ongoing project to facilitate increased speeds and improved reliability along the NEC, including several critical safety and infrastructure improvement. He detailed plans for the procurement of high speed trains, as the current Acela vehicles used on the NEC are getting old. Amtrak is looking to replace them with new high speed trains, while expanding the fleet in the process. Mr. Galloway said that if everything works out with the procurement, the hope is to have new vehicles on the rails around 2020 or 2021. He also noted that Positive Train Control technology has been installed on the entire NEC.

The floor was opened to discussion, which included the following highlights:

- Mr. Palmer asked about the relationship between the North Brunswick flyover and the NEC improvements. Mr. Galloway said that some design elements from the flyover have been incorporated into the NEC projects, but that the funding is separate.
- Mr. Seymour asked how the projects Mr. Galloway described fit with the NEC Future effort. Mr. Galloway said that the Tier 1 EIS being developed for the NEC Future effort creates the framework for all of the improvements he discussed. He noted that Amtrak will provide comments on the DEIS and the three alternatives it lays out.

Amishi Castelli, NEC Future Environmental Lead for the Federal Railroad Administration, presented an overview of the NEC Future project to date. NEC Future is a comprehensive plan to bring the NEC to a state of good repair and relieve existing chokepoints. It includes preparation of a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). She noted that the horizon year for the study is 2040 and that the study area runs from Washington, D.C. to Boston. The Tier 1 EIS will evaluate the impacts of the proposed improvements to the NEC. Ms. Castelli outlined the proposed improvements and shared an overview of the study timeline. She said the goal is to announce a preferred alternative by early April, 2016. This would be followed by more analysis and a Record of Decision (ROD) by late 2016. She praised the large amount of collaboration that has been included in the study effort, especially at the state and federal levels. She described a no-action alternative and three action alternatives: Maintain, Grow, and Expand. All three of these were compared to a "No Action Alternative."

The Maintain alternative would add capacity to keep up with growth in the corridor, including new track to relieve chokepoints. The Grow alternative would expand the role of rail in the corridor, including new connections, for example to the Philadelphia airport. The Transform alternative would add a second spine to the NEC, dedicated to high-speed service. New stations would be included along this new spine. This alternative would also add more rail options between New York City and Boston. Ms. Castelli reviewed some common elements between the alternatives and noted that all of the Action Alternatives would achieve a state of good repair.

Ms. Castelli noted that next steps include identifying a Preferred Alternative, engaging in agency and stakeholder coordination and outreach, and releasing the Tier 1 Final EIS in the fall of 2016. She said it's possible that the Preferred Alternative could end up being a hybrid of the Action Alternatives.

The floor was opened to discussion, which included the following highlights:

- In response to a question from Tony Gambilonghi, Supervising Planner for Transportation for the Middlesex County Office of Planning, Ms. Castelli said that the proposed alignment for the NEC in central and northern New Jersey would be in the existing Right-of-way.
- Mr. Vigna asked how cost would factor into the selection of the preferred alternative. Ms. Castelli said it would be one of several factors considered in evaluating the alternatives. She clarified that figuring out how to fund the preferred alternative is not part of the NEC Future study effort, although various possible funding mechanisms will be identified.
- Dan O'Connell, NJ Legislative Director for SMART, asked if Ms. Castelli's presentation would be made available. She noted that similar presentations can be found at the project website, www.necfuture.com/. Mr. O'Connell said that there is a need for strong leadership to consider raising real money to fund important transit initiatives like NEC Future. He mentioned the recent example of Minnesota, where increased transportation funding has led to economic growth.

3. Federal Funding Update and Discussion of Funding Non-Traditional Transit

Calvin Edghill, Planning and Environment Team Leader for FHWA-NJ, provided an overview of some key provisions of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, particularly as related to funding. Mr. Edghill noted that after ten years of stop-gap actions, there is finally a fully paid for five-year federal transportation funding act. Since this authorization provides five years of funding certainty for infrastructure planning and investment, Mr. Edghill cited it as an opportunity to think strategically and plan dynamically.

Mr. Edghill noted that the Act builds on the program structure laid out under MAP-21 and also adds some new programs. Most programs saw an increase in funding from MAP-21 to the FAST Act. The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) will be renamed, but the funding remains in place. For now, it is simply called "STP set-aside". Another important change to that program is that it now allows nonprofit entities responsible for local transportation safety programs to apply for funds. This had been an issue in the past for local safe routes to school programs. There is also a new National Highway Freight Program, providing about \$1.2 billion per year on average, apportioned to the states by formula. Eligible activities include construction, operational improvements, freight planning, and performance measurement. The program is focused primarily on highways, but there is some funding set aside for rail, port, and other intermodal projects.

The major change initiated by MAP-21 and continued in the FAST Act is the shift to a new era of performance management. Mr. Edghill said that this shift is intended to increase accountability for making effective investments in transportation infrastructure and encourage more consideration of project outcomes throughout the project selection and development process. In terms of improving investments, Mr. Edghill cited the importance of better coordination across federal and other agencies. He encouraged planners to consider how investments will change travel patterns and to think about how to integrate advanced technologies earlier in the design process.

The floor was opened to discussion, which included the following highlights:

- George Ververides, Director of the Middlesex County Office of Planning, asked how to handle the long-term nature of major transportation projects in the context of a five-year funding bill. Many transportation projects take longer than five years to design and construct. Mr. Edghill noted the growing importance of projects to improve operations on existing facilities rather than building new facilities as one way to deal with this issue. He agreed that a long-term funding solution would provide more ability to plan for major projects and encouraged everyone to put pressure on congress to not wait until year five of the FAST Act to begin working on the next five-year (or longer) bill.
- Matt Lawson, Principal Planner for the Mercer County Planning Division, noted that operations projects have proven to be more expensive than initially thought, due to ongoing maintenance costs.
- Zoe Neaderland, Manager of the Office of Transportation Safety and Congestion Management at DVRPC, mentioned that the system performance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), which will detail the congestion performance measures for MAP-21 (and the FAST Act), will be released soon. (It was released on April 22nd, 2016 and is available at www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/04/22/2016-08014/national-performance-management-measures-assessing-performance-of-the-national-highway-system.) Mr. Seymour added that these measures will be used to establish and track progress toward targets, and that DOTs and MPOs may have different targets in some cases.

4. Forum Business

Mr. Neary asked for approval of the October 20th, 2015 meeting summary; it was unanimously approved.

Jesse Buerk, Senior Transportation Planner at DVRPC, provided a progress update on the *Planned Projects Status Report*. A draft version of the transportation section of the report was distributed at the meeting. Mr. Buerk said he was reaching out to municipalities to obtain information for the land development section of the report. He thanked everyone who helped provide information for the report and said the final version will be distributed at the next Forum meeting in June.

5. Best Practices in Implementing Transportation Smart Growth

Mr. Vigna provided an update on the activities of the Rt1RGS and Transit Action Teams, who have been meeting jointly to develop a brochure highlighting smart growth best practices, including real-world implementation examples. He said the Joint Action Team meetings have been great, with excellent participation. At this stage, the group is looking for more local implementation examples to incorporate into the brochure. The overall concept for the brochure is to be short and digestible. Its intended audience is planning board members, council members, and other local decision makers. Ms. Neaderland said that a goal is to find three to five local examples for each strategy discussed in the brochure.

5. Brief Updates and Dialogue

Jeffrey Wilkerson, Principal Planner for the City of Trenton, discussed the progress of the Trenton250 plan. The effort has included a great deal of outreach to help identify a vision and set of opportunities. He said the next step was just beginning, which will involve more outreach to determine goals and strategies. In the fall, the effort will shift gears to begin working on updates to elements of Trenton's Master Plan based on the framework laid out in the Trenton 250 plan. Mr. Wilkerson commended the mayoral administration's strong commitment to making the Master Plan operational.

Mr. Seymour described a forthcoming DVRPC study to identify opportunities for additional park-and-ride capacity in southern New Jersey, including Mercer County. (The study was since published and is available at www.dvrpc.org/Products/15015). He mentioned a project to provide enhanced bus service on US 1 in Pennsylvania, which has some good lessons learned that could be applied in Central Jersey. He said that DVRPC has updated its *Municipal Resource Guide* document, which is intended to assist local and county governments, community groups, and non-profit organizations to identify federal, state, regional, county, and private sources of funding for locally initiated planning and development projects. (The document is available at www.dvrpc.org/Products/16004.) He noted that the Transit Action Team's Transit Funding Sources Guide has been updated and was distributed to the Forum. He announced that DVRPC is launching another round of Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) planning grants for local government this spring.

Zenobia Fields, Director of the Department of Planning for NJTPA, summarized several grant assistance programs provided by NJTPA to help leverage other funding sources. She mentioned that a second round of Together North Jersey pilot projects was forthcoming. She provided a handout in the meeting folders that listed some of the grant assistance programs administered by NJTPA and discussed opportunities to leverage these funding sources.

Mr. Seymour noted the "Goals and Accomplishments" grid in the meeting folders. Jerry Lutin, South Brunswick Township Planning Board Member, thanked Mr. Edghill for his presentation and asked for a similar presentation from a representative of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) at a future meeting. Mr. Seymour said that staff would look into it and try to arrange a presentation.

There were no further comments and the meeting was adjourned.

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