

Transportations Operations Task Force Meeting

Meeting Time: Thursday, January 17th, 2019 at 10:00 AM

Meeting Location: DVRPC Main Conference Room

Meeting Highlights:

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chris King, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), welcomed members and thanked them for attending.

2. Two Minute Agency Reports

Each person in attendance introduced themselves and added any relevant updates from their agency. Some of the highlights include:

- ▶ Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT): An all-electronic toll system will soon be operational along US-301. DelDOT is weighing the importance of the upcoming push for Automated Vehicles. The agency expressed the importance of having coordination with neighboring jurisdictions on this and other issues.
- ▶ TRANSCOM: The Regional Conditions Operational Map will soon be equipped with an additional layer highlighting travel bans and restrictions of specific vehicle types.
- ▶ New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT): The previously planned use of three individual cattle chutes on upcoming NJ 42 construction has been amended. Final lane configuration is still to be determined.

The I-295 Direct Connect project will be implementing a new traffic pattern where the Route 42 northbound Exit 1B ramp traffic will be shifted into a newly constructed covered roadway. There will be a full closure for the Route 322 over Raccoon Creek project. In Spring 2019, construction along Scudder Falls Bridge will create a number of ramp closures and associated detours.

- ▶ Federal Highway (FHWA): During the government shutdown, all FHWA offices are open, as they are funded via the federal gas tax. The office is operating under normal routine operations for FAST Act funding, project authorizations, and reimbursements. Other federal agencies and their contractors are affected, and much of the existing funding has been reverted back to the 2016 levels.

- ▶ Delaware River Bay Authority (DRBA): Construction south of the Delaware Memorial Bridge will soon go from two to three lanes.
- ▶ Burlington County Bridge Commission (BCBC): The Burlington-Bristol Bridge will be in full closure on the night of January 23rd/morning of January 24th for pothole repair (postponed for weather purposes). Painting to continue during overnight hours, with occasional closures. The Tacony-Palmyra Bridge will experience periodic lane closures and lane shifts from 9am-3pm and 9pm-5am.
- ▶ Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA): Painting of the Walt Whitman Bridge continues. Bid will go out later this year for Ben Franklin Bridge to make improvements on steel, painting, and lighting. Toll system will be upgraded and limited impact on PATCO. The Betsy Ross Bridge's first construction phase is finishing in Spring 2019. DRPA is seeking to make improvements on toll system technology which will help facilitate westbound traffic flow, and an RFP for the camera system will go out soon.
- ▶ PATCO: The agency is celebrating its 50th Anniversary on February 15, 2019.
- ▶ John Ward, DVRPC: The federal MPO certification process is complete. DVRPC received numerous commendations, including our Transportation Operations Program, and Mr. Ward expressed his appreciation to the partnering agencies for their continued work with DVRPC.
- ▶ Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT): The I-76 Integrated Corridor Management will introduce the use Variable Speed Limits and Queue Warning Detection this spring. Closures will begin on I-76 going westbound at 9pm Monday through Thursday.
- ▶ New Jersey Turnpike Authority (NJTA): Some advanced signage concerning the new I-95/Turnpike interchange still needs to be completed on approaching roadway. Work should be complete by summer 2019.
- ▶ Elizabeth Schoonmaker, DVRPC: The next NJ Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is in the development process, so now is the time for project managers and stakeholders to assess and advocate for TSMO funding in capital projects where appropriate.
- ▶ Bill Ragozine, Cross County Connections: This will likely be Mr. Bill Ragozine's last meeting, as he is due to retire in April. Mr. Ragozine thanked the group, and offered praise on the complexity of the Direct Connect Project, while it caused only relatively minor traffic disruptions.

3. Bridge Closures

Mr. King provided background on the Transportation Operations Task Force's recently formed steering committee. As a result of the Delaware Memorial Bridge emergency closure over the Thanksgiving weekend, the committee, made up of member agencies, selected bridge closures and their associated policies and affects as a topic pertinent to all transportation agencies in the region. The discussion began with an overview of the specific closure, courtesy of Colonel David Winch of the Delaware River Bay Authority Police Department. It followed with an open discussion of agencies' formal and informal policies and procedures.

Delaware Memorial Bridge Closure Recap

Both spans of the Delaware Memorial Bridge closed on the Sunday evening of Thanksgiving weekend due to chemical exposure leaked from the neighboring chemical plant. Due to the toxic nature of the chemical, the bridge was immediately closed. Majority of traffic was rerouted to the Commodore Barry Bridge. Hard closures and turning vehicles around were difficult to implement due to the holiday and lack of manpower. In the immediate aftermath of the leak, there were communication challenges, and some local agencies were unaware as to why a large influx of traffic flooded their roadways. A unique aspect of this situation was that responders responsible for the closure were those most in harm's way. Their safety had to be addressed in the form of gas masks and appropriate medical monitoring.

NJTA: The timing of Eagles' game impacted traffic management. The turnpike did not want to send more people through Philadelphia, so travelers were brought as far south in New Jersey as possible. NJTA received excellent response and teamwork from local law enforcement.

NJDOT stressed the importance of continued table top exercises to ensure diversion routes are adequate and up-to-date.

DeIDOT contacted PennDOT about the chemical leak. The agency stated that it consistently meets with neighboring states and noted that the tabletop discussions that occur should be shared with other entities.

Discussion explored the benefits of an 'operational contact list' (including dispatch centers) versus an 'administrative contact list', especially for nights and weekends. It was suggested by DeIDOT to contact the transportation management center to notify the correct parties for these issues, and suggested a 24-hour call center. It was noted that in an emergency, it would be beneficial to have a list to pull manpower as needed, and to call the DOTs and New Jersey Regional Operations Intelligence Center (NJ ROIC).

FHWA noted there are federal highway incident requirements when significant closure occur; DOTs must notify the FHWA for situational awareness in the event of significant closures. FHWA then sends notification to its central office in Washington, D.C. of the incident and corrective measures.

The Delaware Memorial Bridge had projected for its highest ever traffic that weekend; was disappointed in the lost revenue. As a result of the emergency closure, the Burlington Bristol Bridge saw an uptick in traffic. Commodore Barry Bridge experienced an increase of traffic, though there were minimal impacts to the Ben Franklin and Betsy Ross Bridges.

Agency Closure Policy and Procedures

DRPA has three approved full bridge closures per year for charity events. The specific closure points are selected so as to not affect local streets. Planning meetings are set with the police force of both cities affected by the bridge closures.

In the event of emergencies or unplanned events, DRPA utilizes a predetermined resource list to determine manpower and pull them as needed. The DOTs are contacted to display messages on their Dynamic Message Signs (DMS). Construction and Maintenance often assists with hard closures. A trailer and motorcycle ban is in effect across all bridges when 35 mph sustained winds occur. Hurricanes force winds will shut down facilities.

DRPA/PATCO runs service and provides alternate routes to customers via the bus if the PATCO Speedline is shut down. Sustained wind speeds of 40 mph require a train speed limit of 50 mph, and 50 mph sustained winds require a complete shutdown. If severe weather is approaching, the agency is proactive with personnel beforehand.

DelDOT: It is a state policy that it is mandatory for personnel to leave the area when experiencing 50 mph sustained winds. The bridge emergency plan is to have a full closure and bridges are not barricaded to allow first responders access to the state.

Burlington County Bridge Commission has moveable spans. Sustained winds above 40 mph close the bridge. The agency works with the U.S. Coast Guard and requires 3-4 month notice to close bridges for planned events. BCBC works well with both DOTs and partnering agencies. The agency noted that Tacony-Palmyra Bridge was struck twice by ships in the last year. Roadway incidents that require a closure are rare, and the NIXLE Notification system is used for closures and other significant events to relay information to the public.

NJTA does not implement wind closures, as they are almost impossible to enforce.

TRANSCOM discussed the preparation and lessons learned from Hurricane Irene. Working in coordination with numerous agencies, traffic was cleared off Staten Island by keeping open the westbound Goethals and eastbound Verrazano. Hard closures are difficult to implement, as conditions typically do not allow personnel to safely be on the bridges. All closures require constant and efficient communication among regional authorities, as each closure sends a ripple effect across the region.

TRANSCOM reported that the New York Department of Transportation plans are built around sustained winds and not wind gusts; they are looking at developing a wind gust plan. Gusts have reached up to 115mph, and have thrown off the recovery of overturned trucks.

NJDOT does not often implement wind closures, though leadership understands the importance of having a policy in place.

Snow Events

The issue of snow events is that they are difficult to handle because of the lack of staffing; multiple agencies want to increase the staffing to handle snow events when possible.

DRPA/PATCO: during snow events, PATCO aims to be as proactive as possible, and keep the trains moving to blow snow off the tracks. In the event of a flash freeze, all four bridges are closed.

Barring a major storm, NJTA does not close to truck traffic, as the trucks' wheels give off heat and ensure the salt remains embedded in the roadway. The agency's policy is to reduce the speed appropriately. The agency actively utilizes Variable Speed Limits

DelDOT: The agency owns and maintains 90 percent of its roads and rarely closes for snow events.

4. Congestion Management Process as DVRPC

Tom Edinger, DVRPC, presented on the region's Congestion Management Process (CMP). Mr. Edinger provided an overview of the CMP, highlighting the increase of both the quality and quantity of available traffic data. This data, combined with associated criteria, such as crash rate and projected land use, rank area roadways and assist in allocating funding and identifying strategies to mitigate existing congestion.

5. Updating Greater Philadelphia Future Forces

Jackie Davis, DVRPC, presented on the agency's Futures Group. The Futures Group is a collaborative, multidisciplinary working group of subject matter experts that uses exploratory scenario planning to understand how various forces (social, technological, environmental, economic, or political) are shaping the region and identify ways to better respond to or benefit from those forces. In early 2019, a Futures Working Group will meet to update the Future Forces, following the Global Business Network scenario planning framework.

6. Upcoming Meeting Dates

- ▶ **Thursday, April 18, 2019**
- ▶ **Thursday, July 18, 2019**
- ▶ **Thursday, October 17, 2019**

MEETING ATTENDEES:

1)	Christian Regosch	Bucks County Planning Commission
2)	Patrick Reilly	Burlington County Bridge Commission
3)	Brian Donovan	Chester County Planning Commission
4)	Bill Ragozine	Cross County Connections TMA
5)	Gene Donaldson	DeIDOT
6)	Jim Bunting	DeIDOT
7)	Jeff Van Horn	DeIDOT
8)	David Winch	Delaware River Bay Authority Police Department
9)	George Bollendorf	Delaware River Port Authority Police Department
10)	Edward W. Cobbs Jr.	Delaware River Port Authority Police Department
11)	Johnny E. Santiago	Delaware River Port Authority Police Department
12)	Valerie Bradford	Delaware River Port Authority
13)	Ek Phomsavarth	FHWA
14)	Dennis Caltagirone	New Jersey Department of Transportation
15)	Jagdish Rana	New Jersey Department of Transportation
16)	Mike Pilsbury	New Jersey Department of Transportation
17)	Mike Moran	New Jersey Department of Transportation
18)	Wayne Patterson	New Jersey Department of Transportation
19)	Kevin Dunn	New Jersey Turnpike Authority
20)	Sam Cappuccio	New Jersey State Police
21)	Rohan Hepkins	PATCO
22)	Pat McBride	PATCO
23)	John Rink	PATCO
24)	Beth Pratt	PATCO
25)	Michael Crowley	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
26)	Patrice L. Nuble	Philadelphia Streets
27)	Patrick Callahan	Philadelphia Streets
28)	Bob Glanzberg	TRANSCOM
29)	Elizabeth Schoonmaker	DVRPC
30)	John Ward	DVRPC
31)	Christine Salvadore	DVRPC
32)	Chris King	DVRPC
33)	Paul Carafides	DVRPC
34)	Tom Edinger	DVRPC
35)	Jackie Davis	DVRPC
36)	Justin Neff	DVRPC

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