

# **NORTH JERSEY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AUTHORITY, INC.**

## **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

*Walter Lane, Chairman  
Kamal Saleh, Vice Chairman*

### **MINUTES**

**April 5, 2006**

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#### **I. Roll Call**

Chairman Lane called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. There were 13 voting members present.

#### **II. Approval of Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 15<sup>th</sup> meeting was made by NJ Transit, seconded by Middlesex County and carried with seven affirmative votes. There were six abstentions.

#### **II. Discussion Items**

##### **1. Review of Standing Committee Agenda Items for April 17<sup>th</sup> Meetings**

It was announced that the Project Prioritization Committee (PPC) meeting scheduled for April 17<sup>th</sup> had been cancelled. A fax ballot for approval of a program change to the FY 2006 NJTPA Local Safety Program would be distributed to PPC members. George Ververides, Middlesex County, voiced his objection to carrying out committee business via fax ballot. It was noted that this option was chosen by the chairman of the PPC, since it was a one-item agenda and the committee meeting would have come shortly after the Board retreat.

Lois Goldman, Central Staff, briefed the Committee on the Local Safety Program action item for the upcoming PPC vote. The FY 2006 proposal for Essex Street/County Route 12 at Summit and Prospect streets, Hackensack, was withdrawn by Bergen County. The funds could not be carried over to the FY 2007 program and thus needed to be reallocated to another FY 2006 project. The proposed modification would fund safety improvements at Mountain Avenue and South Street/Glenside Road in New Providence, Union County, at a cost of \$85,000. An additional \$70,000 would go into a reserve fund to cover rising project costs, and \$265,000 would be added to the NJTPA Future Projects line item in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

It was noted that the agenda items for the Planning & Economic Development Committee would be discussed in the Information Items segment of the meeting.

## 2. Discussion of NJTPA Board Retreat Topics

### a) Subregional Reporting

Mr. Lane announced that he and Kamal Saleh, Union County, would form a subcommittee to consider ways of enhancing the subregional reporting process to facilitate timely submission of reports. He asked for volunteers to contact him within the next few days. David Stein, Central Staff, noted that late submission of subregional reports complicates the overall process for NJTPA reporting to the federal sponsors. Mr. Lane said the topic would be discussed at the upcoming Board retreat.

### b) RTAC Progress on the Five-Year Business Plan

Concerning the RTAC Committee's role and structure, Mr. Lane noted that the RTAC has started to incorporate itself more into the agency's main stream of planning activities. He asked members to think about how the RTAC could strengthen its role and be of greater assistance to the Board. He emphasized the importance of RTAC involvement in the early stages of the formulation of the Project Development Work Program (PDWP) and other Central Staff activities. As an example, Mr. Lane noted that his county is concerned that projects that emerge from technical studies sometimes take a few years to enter the PDWP. He said the Committee should try to strengthen that process to ensure that the results of those studies move more quickly into the project pipeline. He asked the committee members to identify other issues that should be considered. Mr. Lane said that RTAC Vice Chairman Kamal Saleh would represent the Committee at the April 8<sup>th</sup> Board retreat.

In other discussion, Donna Orbach, Bergen County, pointed out that Board members rely heavily on their RTAC representatives for information and advice. She said that Board members sometimes receive mailings that are not sent to RTAC members. Consequently, they are not prepared to answer trustees' questions and provide advice when called upon. Cliff Sobel, Central Staff, said the RTAC should receive everything the Board receives and the matter would be looked into.

## IV. Information Items:

### 1. Criteria Update Progress Report

Kevin Twine, Central Staff, distributed the project schedule for the Project Prioritization Criteria Update. He also provided copies of the proposed agenda for the RTAC Focus Group scheduled for April 26<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM. He asked the Committee members to review the agenda and provide him with their comments before April 7<sup>th</sup>. He said a meeting package would be sent to them prior to the focus group session.

Mr. Twine reported that the project consultant, Louis Berger Group, will be working on five tasks during April. Three deliverables are due from the consultant in April:

1. The findings of a study of other MPOs' criteria strategies
2. The results of meetings with NJDOT and NJ Transit concerning their criteria processes
3. Notes from the RTAC focus group meeting

Mr. Twine also reported that on April 10<sup>th</sup> the project consultant would inform Central Staff about the results of an outreach and coordination plan they are working on. In addition, the consultant would report on progress of all tasks.

## 2. Upcoming Road Safety Audit Workshops

Chris Hrones, Central Staff, announced that the workshops will be held at the NJTPA on April 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. He explained that a road safety audit is a comprehensive approach to reviewing safety concerns at specific locations through a field visit. Features of the audit include:

- It is proactive,
- Considers all road users, including cyclists and pedestrians,
- Ideally considers night and daytime conditions, and
- Is multidisciplinary, utilizing an independent team

Mr. Hrones reported that the audit workshop is a program of the Federal Highway Administration aimed at planners and engineers. He noted that the City of Newark is playing an important role in the effort. The deadline for participating in the workshops was April 7<sup>th</sup>.

## 3. A New and Improved Access and Mobility Strategy Evaluation

Central Staffers Brian Fineman, Amber Mitchell and Deva Deka made a presentation on beginning a “New and Improved” Access and Mobility Strategy Evaluation. Dr. Fineman presented an overview of the effort. He highlighted its importance to the NJTPA planning and prioritization processes and noted that it will support the Board’s decision-making about advancing strategies in specific locations.

With the help of an example, Ms. Mitchell demonstrated how existing NJTPA policies, such as the Regional Capital Investment Strategy, could be used for setting objectives for different types of places or areas in the region. This would allow for an improved performance-based assessment of transportation needs.

Dr. Deka highlighted the importance of continuous involvement of the RTAC in achieving the desired goals of the effort and keeping the process simple and comprehensible. He mentioned that a Central Staff working group had been formed, and that a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), consisting of representatives from NJTPA subregions, partners, and other experts in the field, would soon be formed in collaboration with Mr. Lane, the RTAC Chairman.

Mr. Lane said he was glad RTAC will play a crucial role. He said the committee could lend much to the discussions, and he asked RTAC members to contact him with questions or to express interest in serving on the TAC.

#### 4. Update of the FY 2007 Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Program

David Stein, Central Staff, reported that JARC was essentially an earmark program, with specific funding amounts allocated to each state. However, it now has become a national program with a different formula for allocating funds. As a result, ambitions for the program in the NJTPA region have to be scaled back. There is enough funding to continue the region's 17 ongoing programs, but new programs cannot be taken on. He said that the Board will consider approval of the 17 programs at its May meeting. In answer to a question from the floor, Mr. Stein said it was not known yet if the subregions would need to update their JARC plans, as the new federal guidelines had not yet been issued. John Lane, Hudson County, who served on the JARC advisory committee, noted that the program could continue to operate on the same funding level and parameters for several more years.

#### 5. Update on Development of the FY 2007 PDWP and the NJTPA-Sponsored Corridor Studies

Mr. Stein thanked the subregions for their participation in the PDWP consultation process. He said the document, which was being mailed shortly, contained corrections that emerged from the consultations. He noted that formulating the draft took more time than anticipated, because the state was delayed in providing the data base for FY 2007. Mr. Stein said:

- 69 projects graduated from the FY 2006 program into the pool for consideration to enter the TIP.
- The new program contains 194 projects, 41 of which were locally sponsored.
- Of 153 non-local projects 52 are in Concept Development, 26 in Feasibility Assessment and 67 in Preliminary Design.
- Of the new starts (not counting the Bridge Management and drainage projects), NJTPA's Strategy Refinement program accounts for 40 percent of the candidates that made it into the program (6 of 14). Additionally, two corridor studies were added under the sponsorship of the NJTPA.
- All categories in the Regional Transportation Plan and Regional Capital Investment Strategy were addressed, including Safety, Freight, Intelligent Transportation Systems, Bicycle/ Pedestrian, and Smart Growth.

Concerning the NJTPA sponsored corridor studies, Ms. Goldman reported that three meetings with local elected officials had been held so far for the I-78 Transit Corridor study. She thanked Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren counties for their help in setting up the meetings and getting mayors involved. Ms. Goldman said that Central Staff had the capacity for conducting two corridor studies. The George Washington Bridge Toll Plaza Transit Study, which will look at bus operations and mobility approaching the bridge, is proposed as the second study to be led by Central Staff. A brief general discussion ensued.

#### V. Other Items

- Referring to the upcoming Board retreat, Mr. Ververides asked members to consider how the group has been undertaking their work as it relates to the Strategic Business Plan. He pointed out the importance of voicing their thoughts about the future role of the RTAC

and identifying the relationship of their activities to the current business plan. He said that, as a group, their thoughts could be incorporated into the next business plan.

- Steve Brown, PANYNJ, announced the retirement of Geneva Graham and conveyed her greetings to the committee. Mr. Brown replaces Ms. Graham as the Port Authority's RTAC representative.

#### **IV. Next Meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, at 10:30 a.m.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

**RTAC ATTENDANCE**

April 5, 2006

Walter Lane, Chairman	Somerset County
Donna Orbach	Bergen County
David Antonio	City of Newark
James Bartell	Essex County
John Lane	Hudson County
Denise David	Hunterdon County
Doug Greenfeld	Jersey City
George Ververides	Middlesex County
John Hayes	Morris County
Jerry Lutin	NJ Transit
Steve Decker	NJDOT
Steve Brown	PANYNJ
Tom Drabic	Sussex County
Liza Betz	Union County
Peter Vaughan	Warren County
E. Wesley Day	Union County
Naomi Hsu	Jersey City
Brian Wahler	New Jersey Turnpike Authority
Christopher Helms	Bergen County
Crystal Baynes	Hunterdon County
Karen Shannon	Central Staff
Cliff Sobel	Central Staff
Brian Fineman	Central Staff
Deva Deka	Central Staff
Amber Mitchell	Central Staff
Migi Lee	Central Staff
Lois Goldman	Central Staff
Chris Hrones	Central Staff
Dave Behrend	Central Staff
Martin Hofler	Central Staff
Ann Ludwig	Central Staff
Kevin Twine	Central Staff
Beverly Morris	Central Staff