

NORTH JERSEY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AUTHORITY, INC.

SUSAN M. ZELLMAN, CHAIRMAN

MINUTES

July 28, 2008

A. Open Public Meetings Act Compliance

Chairman Zellman opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. Marie Della Pelle, Central Staff, reported that, in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L.1975, adequate notice of this meeting had been forwarded to the *Star Ledger*, the *Jersey Journal*, *The Record*, the *Courier News*, the *Asbury Park Press*, and the *New Jersey Herald News*. Notice was also posted in the Essex County Administration Building, Newark, New Jersey, and on the bulletin board of the Secretary of State, Trenton, New Jersey.

B. Roll Call

Following the salute to the flag, Ms. Della Pelle called the roll. Sixteen voting members were present (Attachment 1).

C. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the May 12th meeting was made by Middlesex County, seconded by Ocean County, and carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 4th teleconference was made by Hunterdon County, seconded by NJ Transit and carried unanimously. Clarifying a point in the minutes, the Chairman noted that a total of 17 voting members participated in the teleconference—16 via telephone and one on site at the NJTPA offices.

D. Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Zellman reported that the latest version of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) includes \$2.6 billion in funding for FY 2009 road, rail and other projects in the region. She pointed out that funding for future improvements is an area of concern in light of the status of the depleted state Transportation Trust Fund, which must be renewed by the state Legislature. The Chairman noted that the federal Highway Trust Fund is also being depleted and facing declining gas tax revenues.

Chairman Zellman said that such financial uncertainties make planning for a wide range of future possibilities all the more important at the NJTPA, which is updating the Regional Transportation Plan to provide a vision and foundation for regional transportation investment through 2035. She reported that the NJTPA in June hosted a symposium on the future of transportation at which more than 100 people heard a panel of expert speakers. She said that the panel offered a glimpse

of powerful national and international forces that will greatly affect the region, including an evolving global economy, rising energy prices, changing demographics, and other factors.

The Chairman stressed that meeting these challenges and seizing these opportunities will call for a regional vision. To that end, the NJTPA will conduct regional transportation visioning workshops this fall in the 13 counties and two cities represented on the NJTPA Board. She said that these sessions will allow the Trustees to directly engage their constituents in a discussion about how scarce resources will be allocated. Also, the Board will participate in its own visioning workshop. Chairman Zellman announced that an online Transportation 2035 survey will be up and running within the next week or so through the NJTPA website.

A three minute “first cut” video that introduces the NJTPA’s Plan 2035 was shown after Chairman Zellman concluded her remarks. A final version will be shown at the visioning workshops in the fall.

E. Executive Director’s Report

NJTPA Executive Director Mary K. Murphy reported that the FY 2009 TIP presented to the Board contains \$2.6 billion in projects and programs for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 and over \$10 billion from FY 2009-2012. She noted that 21 percent of the funds will be invested in the repair or replacement of many bridges, large and small, throughout the region.

Ms. Murphy reported that all of the Board’s 13 counties and two cities will see important roadway system projects that will benefit the traveling public. She said that many projects will focus on redesigning and upgrading the intersections of heavily traveled routes to reduce traffic tie-ups and improve safety. Others will focus on resurfacing major highway routes. Ms. Murphy also reported that transit will receive about 40 percent of available funds, totaling \$1.1 billion in FY 2009. Transit projects funded include:

- Continuation of the ARC project, which will provide a new Hudson River rail tunnel;
- Extension of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail to 8th Street in Bayonne, Hudson County;
- Initial segment of the Lackwanna Cutoff rail line; and
- Upgrades to rail and bus rolling stock and transit facilities throughout the network.

Ms. Murphy pointed out the difficulties encountered in forging this impressive agenda of projects. She discussed the “Tier 2” or unfunded projects list presented with the state’s Capital Construction Program earlier this year. She noted that the list accompanies the TIP document, and she said that, while the state and the NJTPA were able able to fund a few projects on the list in this TIP, many worthy projects are still waiting for additional funding to become available. She said that this difficult circumstance emphasizes the critical need to renew and expand the transportation trust funds at both the state and national levels.

Ms. Murphy thanked Chairman Zellman, members of the Project Prioritization Committee under the chairmanship of Bergen County Executive Dennis McNerney, the staff of the NJTPA Capital Programming Division and its Director Martin Hofler, and the staff at NJDOT and NJ Transit. She singled out NJDOT Director of Capital Investment Planning & Development, Tom Wospil, for “a job well done.”

Ms. Murphy highlighted other significant Central Staff activities since the last Board meeting:

- The NJTPA hosted a series of training sessions on its newly enhanced North Jersey Regional Transportation Model for the subregions and other partner agency staff.
- Staff conducted a workshop that will help to finalize the Strategy Evaluation, NJTPA's performance-based study of accessibility and mobility needs in the region.
- The Regional Coordinated Human Services Plan and Executive Summary was finalized and distributed. The plan focuses on improving mobility options for the transportation disadvantaged population (seniors, persons with disabilities who do not drive, low income persons needing reliable transportation to jobs, and rural travelers).
- The Regional Safety Priorities Study Update was completed. Twenty-five site visits at critical locations were conducted throughout the 15 subregions and recommendations were developed for improving roadway safety for driver, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and truckers.
- The NJTPA Rail Grade Crossing Assessment Study will be finalized and presented to the Board for approval at the September meeting. The study evaluated 64 rail crossings in the region in terms of safety, mobility and quality-of-life issues.

F. Key Discussion Issue

Surface Transportation Funding: A Look Ahead

Joung Lee—Senior Analyst for Transportation Finance and Business Development, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)—described several factors that have contributed to the nation's current transportation crisis. With the aid of a slide presentation (available at www.njtpa.org), Mr. Lee pointed out that the nation has systematically underinvested in its transportation systems despite regional population growth, an expected doubling of freight transport by 2035, rising highway and transit needs, and increasing congressional earmarks in highway bills.

Mr. Lee also shared the findings of a report by the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission. The report emphasized the need for a clear, comprehensive, well-articulated, and widely understood strategic vision with defined goals. Mr. Lee highlighted financial needs and funding recommendations identified in the report, and he stressed the need for the authorization of an entirely revamped surface transportation program, not simply reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU. He announced that AASHTO's board will adopt recommendations for the authorization in October 2008. Mr. Lee expanded on his presentation during a brown-bag session immediately following the meeting.

G. Committee Reports/Action Items

Project Prioritization – County Executive Dennis McNerney, Chairman

County Executive McNerney reported that the Committee shared a joint meeting with the Planning and Economic Development Committee on July 14th. He said that the Committee considered five action items at the meeting:

- **NJTPA Self-Certification**—Mr. McNerney explained that Self-Certification must be approved each year at the time the TIP is adopted. He said that the resolution confirms that the NJTPA is in compliance with all relevant federal regulations.
- **FY 2009-2012 TIP**—Mr. McNerney reported that the draft TIP was reviewed by the subregions, and subjected to a 30-day public comment period. He explained that the region's Air Quality Conformity Determination that accompanies the TIP is an analysis showing that implementation of the projects in the TIP will not lead to emissions that exceed the region's air quality budgets. Mr. McNerney reported that the TIP is in compliance with federal clean air regulations.
- **Recommended Increase in Future Local Aid for County and Municipal Road and Bridge Improvements**—Mr. McNerney recalled that the Board approved a similar resolution last year. He explained that the need for the increase in Local Aid is well documented in a report commissioned by the New Jersey Association of Counties. Mr. McNerney said that approval of the resolution will serve as the NJTPA's recommendation to the state legislature of an increase in Local Aid to \$300 million a year from the currently proposed \$200 million a year.
- **Five recommended projects for the FY 2009 Local Safety Program and five for the High Risk Rural Road Program**—The County Executive reported that a technical review committee screened all applications to the programs and recommended 10 projects totaling nearly \$3 million. He said that the selection was based on how well projects will address safety needs through quick fix and construction-ready improvements. Mr. McNerney noted that two additional projects totaling almost \$350,000 were also recommended should additional funding become available.
- **Revisions to the FY 2008 TIP to Include Seven Congressionally Earmarked Projects Specified in SAFETEA-LU**—The County Executive reported that the sponsors of six earmarked projects requested that they be included in the current TIP because they believe that the projects will be authorized for funding before the end of FY 2008. He noted that fiscal constraint is maintained because the projects have their own earmarked funding.

Mr. McNerney reported also that, since the meeting, Ocean County requested that an additional project be added to the current TIP—reconstruction of Route 539 at the New Fort Dix Lakehurst Naval Station Entrance. Subsequent to the meeting, the Committee concurred with adding this project to the list of additional projects. He noted that, as with the six earmarked projects, this project comes with its own funding, so fiscal restraint is maintained with no negative impact on other projects in the TIP.

Action Item 1: Approval of the FY 2009 Self-Certification (Attachment 2)

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Middlesex County, seconded by Jersey City, and carried unanimously.

Action Item 2: Approval of the FY 2009-2012 TIP and the Accompanying Conformity Determination (Attachment 3)

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Middlesex County, seconded by Somerset County, and approved unanimously.

Action Item 3: Approval of a Recommended Increase in Future Local Aid for County and Municipal Road and Bridge Improvements (Attachment 4)

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Passaic County and seconded by Middlesex County.

David Kuhn, NJDOT, said the agency would abstain, because, while it agrees that the local needs exist, it needs to consider a Local Aid funding increase in light of all the state's other funding needs and constraints on the Transportation Trust Fund. Mr. Kuhn said the agency encourages and supports the exploration of additional funding sources.

The motion was carried with 12 affirmative votes. NJDOT, NJ Transit, Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ), and the Governor's representative abstained.

Action Item 4: Approval of the FY 2009 Local Safety Program Projects and the High Risk Rural Roads Program Projects (Attachment 5)

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Jersey City, seconded by Somerset County, and carried unanimously.

Action Item 5: Approval of Revisions to the FY 2008 TIP/STIP for Seven Congressionally Earmarked Projects (Attachment 6)

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Passaic County, seconded by Ocean County and carried unanimously.

Planning and Economic Development – Freeholder John DiMaio, Chairman

Ms. Murphy reported on the Committee's activities in the absence of its chairman and vice chairman. She said that the Committee considered two action items at the joint meeting, both of which involve amendments to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

- Fiscal Year 2008 Local CMAQ Initiatives Funding for NJ Transit's Locomotive Idle Reduction Program—Ms. Murphy explained that the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program (CMAQ) is a major source of funding for projects with air quality benefits. She said that, in the past, funding for the Local CMAQ Initiatives Program has

primarily been used to support the establishment and operation of local shuttle services. Ms. Murphy said that the NJTPA completed a study last year of other possible Transportation Clean Air Measures, and one of the beneficial measures identified in the study would help reduce idling of NJ Transit diesel locomotives by equipping them with new technology. She said that approval of the resolution will support NJ Transit's proposal for a Locomotive Idle Reduction Program by using \$537,500 of residual CMAQ funding from the Fiscal Year 2008 program. (NJ TRANSIT provided a brief report on their current efforts to reduce idling of diesel locomotives. The report was distributed to each Trustee that morning.)

- An amendment to the FY 2009 UPWP to Reprogram Subregional Training Funds and to Add Funds to Review and Assess Central Staff Positions and Salary Structure—Ms. Murphy explained that training funds were shifted to the fall, with the approval of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee, to ensure greater participation by the subregions. Concerning the Central Staff analysis, Ms. Murphy reported that NJIT and the Executive Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to hire a consultant to review and assess salaries and positions within the NJTPA and to conduct a related external market analysis.

Ms. Murphy also reported that Central Staff—with the support of representatives from NJDOT—provided an overview of Quiet Zone regulations for the use of locomotive horns at railroad grade crossings and a description of the procedural requirements for obtaining Quiet Zone Designation. She said that safety and liability concerns were also discussed, and the matter was forwarded to the Freight Initiatives Committee for further follow-up.

Action Item 6: Approval of the FY 2008 Local CMAQ Initiatives Funding for NJ Transit's Locomotive Idle Reduction Program (Attachment 7)

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Monmouth County and seconded by Jersey City.

Freeholder Matthew Holt, Hunterdon County, spoke on behalf of the Borough of High Bridge. He requested a meeting to discuss locomotive idling noise and the fact that all trains stopping in the borough will not be equipped with the idle reduction technology. He suggested that a review of the locations of idling locomotives that affect the town may lead to a resolution of the problem. Richard Roberts, NJ Transit, said that he spoke with operations personnel who informed him that even though some trains to High Bridge will be equipped with the technology, this feature will probably not reduce all of the noise issues, because the trains sit for only a short period of time before going right into service. He said he would pass Freeholder Holt's request for further discussion on the issue to NJ Transit. Mr. Roberts noted that a technical analysis is underway, and the analysis may provide answers to the issue.

Freeholder Peter Palmer, Somerset County, and Chairman Zellman expressed similar concerns as Freeholder Holt's about rail related noise on behalf of the Borough of Raritan, in Somerset County; Roxbury Township, in Morris County; and other small municipalities that are adjacent to rail lines and yards.

The motion was carried unanimously.

Action Item 7: Approval to Amend the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program to Reprogram Subregional Training Funds and to Add Funds to Review and Assess Central Staff Positions and Salary Structure (Attachment 8)

Chairman Zellman commented that an objective review of Central Staff positions by an outside organization will benefit the NJTPA in its effort to become more competitive.

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Bergen County, seconded by Hudson County, and carried unanimously.

Freight Initiatives – Freeholder Peter Palmer, Chairman

Freeholder Palmer reported that the Committee considered one action item at its June 3rd meeting: Submission of the Freight Rail Crossing Assessment Study to the NJDOT, NJ Transit, Conrail, CSX Corp. and Norfolk Southern Corp. for their Review and Appropriate Follow-Up. He said the Committee unanimously recommended approval of the resolution, which will be presented to the Board for approval at its next meeting. A copy of the report was provided to each Trustee that morning.

The Freeholder also reported that a representative from PANYNJ described several initiatives intended to improve environmental conditions in the Port area. The Freeholder said that the positive economic impact of these so-called “Green Initiatives” is extremely important to the region, and the PANYNJ’s proactive strategy includes forming successful working relationships with the Port’s tenants.

Freeholder Palmer announced that the NJTPA will host a Liberty Corridor meeting on August 12, and he will participate in a meeting about Local Aid funding with NJDOT Commissioner Kolluri.

Freeholder Palmer introduced Scott Parker, of Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc. With the aid of a slide presentation, Mr. Parker gave a brief overview of the NJTPA Freight Rail Grade Crossing Assessment Study. He said the key objectives of the study were to:

- Create evaluation criteria and a prioritization framework;
- Identify and prioritize issues and needs;
- Differentiate between safety and quality of life concerns;
- Identify a range of potential solutions and best practices; and
- Facilitate an advancing mechanism for the selection of realistic solutions that address the issues.

Mr. Parker noted that the end result of these tasks is a toolbox that the NJTPA can use within and beyond the current study—a process that is applicable to any rail corridor.

Mr. Parker said that the study team evaluated 64 grade crossings on five freight rail corridors. He described five representative crossings and the criteria evaluation, weighting, and ranking methodology. Mr. Parker said that the next steps for the study are:

- Release of study findings/products by the adoption of the study by the NJTPA Board of Trustees at its September meeting;
- Advancement of problem statements in the study; and
- Advancement of discussions and development of problem statements for the next 10 crossings on the ranking list.

The draft final report of the study was distributed to the Trustees at the meeting.

J) Public Participation

Freeholder John D'Amico, Monmouth County alternate Trustee to the Board, highlighted three problems identified in a memo that he received from the Gateway National Park chief ranger concerning the Route 36 Bridge project between Highlands and Sea Bright. He said that:

- The frequency of the current bridge opening schedule contributes to extensive traffic backups and bottlenecks at the site, and emergency response vehicles have difficulty safely navigating these obstacles. The Freeholder also reported that the situation is causing several motor vehicle accidents, constant road rage, and extended commutes for the National Park Service employees. He noted that the area's tourism sector is also suffering.
- Bottlenecking at Highlands bridge would be reduced if NJDOT would mark alternative routes to the Garden State Parkway.
- Transportation alternatives promised by NJDOT, such as weekend service on the Belford Ferry, need to be instituted along with a consolidated effort to convince travelers to use alternate transportation for non-ocean based beaches.

The Freeholder called upon NJDOT and other interested parties to take immediate action because solutions to the problems are critical to tourism in and around Monmouth County as well as to the state's economy. David Kuhn, NJDOT thanked the Freeholder for raising the issues and said he was not aware of the details of the situation, but he would look into it and contact Freeholder D'Amico with feedback to his comments.

Referring to the grade crossing study, Stewart Weiss, Inman Railroad Committee, thanked Mr. Parker for the high ranking applied to the Inman Avenue grade crossing in Edison. He also voiced his opposition to the Lackawanna Cutoff project, which he said will cost NJ Transit lost revenue, because it will have to make up the difference between fares collected and the cost of operating the line. Mr. Weiss also reiterated his concern that state's freight rail system is insufficient to accommodate the expected growth in freight, which he said will exacerbate the problems posed by at-grade rail crossings.

Michael Gray, Montgomery, Somerset County, urged the Board's support for the funding of quiet zone measures in the interests of addressing quality-of-life and safety issues in several municipalities located near rail lines and grade crossings. He said that an overarching approach should be taken to identifying and funding quiet zones. Mr. Gray said that that some crossings can be made compliant with quiet zone regulations for \$50,000 to \$70,000 and installing them now will minimize controversy later.

Elizabeth Cox, New Jersey Research and Information Service, asked the Board to look into the prospect of grade crossings on rail lines that are now inactive but will be reactivated in the future. She pointed out the reactivation of the M&E rail line and an extension of the line through Summit. She said that NJ Transit has authorized the project, which would reactivate an at-grade crossing on Route 22 and bisect Springfield. She also noted that the rail line is about 10 feet from Overlook Hospital.

William Wright, who said he sits on several transportation advisory boards, advocated the restoration of inactive rail lines and the addition of another regional freight line along the Lackawanna Cutoff to handle the growing port traffic. He also suggested that the NJTPA advise the PANYNJ to raise the clearance under the Bayonne Bridge to accommodate the larger new-generation container ships. He urged all to “see the big picture” and stop looking at rail restorations as “single use entities.”

Tom Drabic, Sussex County Transportation Planner, responded to Mr. Weiss’ comments about the Lackawanna Cutoff project. He said that the project will serve to reduce the severe congestion problems on Route 80 through increased transit ridership. Mr. Drabic noted that previous ridership projections for the line were made when gasoline was \$2 per gallon. He said that, considering the 80 miles of passenger rail and commuter services the project will bring to an unserved area, the project cost is a bargain. Mr. Drabic also pointed out that every mass transit system in the world is heavily subsidized, and the Lackawanna Cutoff would have one of the highest fare box recovery rates in the U.S.

K) Time and Place of Next Meeting

Chairman Zellman announced that the next meeting of the NJTPA will be held on Monday, September 8, 2008 at 10:00 a.m., at the NJTPA offices at One Newark Center, Newark, NJ.

L) Adjournment

At 12:00 p.m. a motion to adjourn was made by Middlesex County, seconded by Jersey City and carried unanimously.