

NORTH JERSEY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AUTHORITY, INC.

FREIGHT INITIATIVES COMMITTEE

FREEHOLDER PETER PALMER, CHAIRMAN
COUNTY EXECUTIVE THOMAS DeGise, VICE CHAIRMAN

Minutes

October 4, 2007

Chairman Palmer called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

I. Roll Call of Members

There were eight voting members of the Freight Initiatives Committee present.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2007 meeting was made by NJ Transit, seconded by NJDOT and carried unanimously.

III. Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Peter Palmer reported that he and NJTPA staff have been active with significant freight activities, including the consultant-led Truck Rest Stop study, the Freight Rail Crossing and Safety Assessment study, and participation in Senator Menendez's Liberty Corridor initiative.

The Chairman noted that he participates on the Liberty Corridor Technical Advisory Board and the Technical and Advisory Committees, which recommend projects and investments that support the corridor's development. He said the Liberty Corridor is envisioned as a corridor of national significance that combines the strengths of the region's ports, universities, and goods movement system and the potential of brownfields to create a model of innovation, research and economic development.

Chairman Palmer announced that at its November 19 meeting the Board would consider allocating \$100 million to Liberty Corridor projects that underwent a public review process ending October 1. He noted that the Project Prioritization Committee (PPC) would review and recommend the proposed amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to the full Board. The Chairman said that NJDOT is working in parallel to finalize the required Article 1301 application for submission to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The Chairman said he was pleased to note that two rail freight projects are included in the Liberty Corridor program. They are:

1. Port Reading Junction project – This project will create a double track connection between CSX's West Trenton Line, Norfolk Sothern's Lehigh Valley Line and Conrail's Port Reading Secondary Line.
2. New Jersey Railroad Doublestack Clearance project – This project will raise the overhead clearance on Conrail's National Dock Secondary Line to the intermodal standard of 20 feet, 6 inches. This will allow the stacking of two-high-cube containers. Chairman Palmer noted that these containers are becoming the standard in international and domestic shipping, and this project would eliminate restrictions of their use on this line.

The Chairman concluded his report by introducing Ted Matthews as the new NJTPA Director of Freight Planning (formerly Executive Director of Transportation Services at NJDOT).

IV. Staff Updates

NJTPA Truck Rest Stop Study

Dave Dawson, Central Staff, reported that the project is expected to be completed by the end of the year. He said that field data collection is complete, and the study team has analyzed and summarized the results. He said the NJTPA report will be part of a tri-state report incorporating collaborative efforts by the NJTPA, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and the southern Connecticut metropolitan planning organizations.

Mr. Dawson reported that two of three stakeholder meetings were held and that objectives established at those meetings had been achieved. He said that a list of candidate truck parking sites was trimmed to a final group that closely follows the 17 selection criteria developed by the Technical Advisory Committee. Mr. Dawson said briefings were conducted during meetings with NJDOT, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, NJ Transit and the PANYNJ. He noted that proposed sites are being vetted with partner agencies.

Mr. Dawson stressed that the study will make specific recommendations for truck rest stop sites.

Freight Rail Crossing and Safety Assessment Study

Ted Matthews, Central Staff, said that projections in the NJTPA Regional Transportation Plan indicate that freight rail traffic in the region will double over the next 25 years. He said that this traffic would result in increased delays at rail grade crossings and create potential safety and quality-of-life issues in communities where these crossings are located. He said the rail crossing study would assess these impacts systematically and identify potential remedies to improve traffic flow at critical locations along major rail lines.

Mr. Matthews said that a Request for Proposals was issued in the spring and the firm of Jacobs Edwards & Kelcey was selected in August. Additional support will be provided by Anne Strauss-Wieder Associates and Atlantic Rail Services.

Mr. Matthews said that the consultants will develop a GIS database of rail crossings throughout the region. He said development of enhanced data for all crossings along five major rail lines is underway. They are the:

- Lehigh Valley Line,
- West Trenton Line,
- Chemical Coast
- Port Reading Secondary Line, and
- CSX River Line (Bergen County)

Mr. Matthews reported that the study's Technical Advisory Committee, which had met recently, consists of representatives from the NJTPA, NJDOT, NJ Transit, the PANYNJ, and all affected counties.

Mr. Matthews also reported that the consultants soon will organize a stakeholders group. One of the group's key activities will be to assist with the development of a methodology for ranking the crossings. He said extensive outreach to counties and municipalities will be conducted to better understand the crossings' day-to-day impacts – especially in terms of safety. Outreach will also include gathering information from the railroads about forecasts for rail movement and future capital improvements. He said the final product would be a prioritized list of the 15 to 20 rail crossings experiencing the highest impacts, along with a range of strategies and solutions for addressing these impacts. He noted that consultants will develop a toolbox so that these approaches could be applied to other crossings in the region as well.

Elaborating on the final product of the study, Scott Parker of Jacobs Edwards & Kelcey and project manager for the consultant team, said the team will conduct a national search for best practices used by other regions. He noted that the focus will be directed at the actual root of problems rather than perceived causes.

Mr. Matthews said the study is expected to conclude by the end of April 2008.

Stuart Weiss, Inman Rail Road Committee, said he is glad to learn the rail crossing study will be advancing. He noted that the basic problem is really the increase in the number and length of trains that will result from the increase of freight entering the port. He said the solution to moving freight out of the port efficiently and curbing problems caused by the growth in freight traffic is a high-speed, dedicated freight rail system with no grade crossings. He recommended that this possibility be studied in depth. He reiterated his concern over the diminishing viability of roads with grade crossings as freight rail traffic increases. Chairman Palmer thanked Mr. Weiss for his comments and said the study would examine many of his concerns.

II. Presentation: New Jersey Turnpike Exit 8A Area Transportation and Land Use Study

Dr. Martin Bierbaum is the Director of Municipal Land Use Center at the College of New Jersey. He noted that the Center is funded by a FHWA grant that is administered by the NJDOT.

Dr. Bierbaum said the study focuses on the area around New Jersey Turnpike Exit 8A, which is characterized by a high concentration of warehouses and distribution centers. He said that goods movement there is expected to increase exponentially as port activity grows, and the area's stakeholders must find ways to accommodate the growing freight traffic there while mitigating its effects on the surrounding community. Dr. Bierbaum said the competing perspectives of NJDOT, the NJ Turnpike Authority, the municipalities and counties, and the private sector complicate transportation planning for the 8A area. He said the study seeks to bridge the "disconnect" between statewide policy and local land use decision making.

Dr. Bierbaum said the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University is working with South Brunswick, Cranbury and Monroe to develop additional planning tools relevant to local land use. He said the effort also includes a series of stakeholder forums focusing on generating policy recommendations. A regional planning internet mapping tool (www.communitymap.net/exit8a/) was developed to identify, analyze and update existing and planned warehouse and distribution sites in the area. He noted that the application still requires data contributions, but said it is a valuable tool for accessing data to facilitate transportation and land use planning. Dr. Bierbaum concluded his remarks with a request for suggestions for promoting and increasing stakeholder use of the tool. Dr. Wan Soo Im then elaborated briefly on the application.

Dr. Bierbaum distributed copies of the study report and announced that it was available on compact discs. A brief general discussion ensued.

After the presentation, Chairman Palmer noted that government must acquire land for truck stops, because they are not a high-value tax ratable, and developers would prefer not to invest in them. He also noted the 8A area is popular for freight related development because the time spent in securing Department of Environmental Protection approval for projects is shorter, making the process of implementing projects there easier.

V. Discussion Item – Enhancing Outreach Efforts

Mr. Matthews asked committee members, stakeholders and others present at the meeting for their ideas and suggestions for enhancing NJTPA outreach efforts to the freight movement community. He noted that the NJTPA is not an implementing agency, but it has the ability to run feasibility studies, advance projects through the Project Development Work Program, and to work with private and public sectors to advocate worthy projects. He said the NJTPA has the capacity and resources to "bring the right people to the table" for working out public/private sector issues.

Mr. Matthews stressed the value of the collective knowledge and experience of the members of the Freight Initiatives Committee and the stakeholders and interested parties that participate in its meetings. He said this expertise could be applied to issues such as innovative transportation funding, the Liberty Corridor, and private sector involvement in the Regional Transportation Plan update process. Three ideas were offered from the floor:

1. Establish subcommittees to focus on specific challenges in freight movement.
2. Host a meeting of the New Jersey Society for Economic and Environmental Development.
3. Create an interactive website for periodic open discussions on specific issues.

Help in reaching the private sector was offered by Katie Watson, Executive Director of Nation's Port, and Dick Jones, representative of the Association of Bi-State Motor Carriers.

Mr. Matthews said he would be reaching out for thoughts and ideas, and should anyone want to contact him he can be reached at 973-639-8404. His email address is tmatthews@njtpa.org.

The discussion was followed by a comment by William Fidursky, Coalition to Stop the Freight Train, who said that no port expansion can be done successfully without a new major rail initiative. He stressed the need for a high-speed freight rail system, which he said would benefit motor carriers as well as the Port.

Mr. Weiss suggested informing the public about issues surrounding New Jersey's growing freight movement activity and the problems associated with it. In his words, "If they don't know, they can't help."

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous verbal acclaim at 11:40 a.m.

Freight Initiatives Committee

Attendance

October 4, 2007

VOTING MEMBERS	
Freeholder Peter Palmer, Chairman	Somerset County
John Lane	Hudson County
Liza Betz	Union County
Tom Drabic	Sussex County
Mehdi Mohammadish	Newark
Paul Truban	NJDOT
Rich Wisneski	NJ Transit
Steve Brown	PANYNJ
OTHERS	
Linda Forrester	NJDOT
Erik DeLine	Morris County Dept. of Transportation
Harry T. Smith	PANYNJ
George Ververides	Middlesex County Planning Board
Fernando Rubio	Newark Dept. of Engineering
Naomi Hsu	Jersey City Dept. of Housing and Economic Development
Crystal Barnes	Hunterdon County Planning Dept.
Donna Orbach	Bergen County
Chris Helms	Bergen County
Dan O'Connell	UTU
Dick Jones	Association of Bi-State Motor Carriers
Martin Bierbaum	Municipal Land Use Center of the College of New Jersey
Mike Cullins	New Jersey Environmental Protection Agency
Brian Wahler	New Jersey Turnpike Authority
Katie Watson	Nation's Port
Kevin Dow	Eng-Wong, Taub & Associates.
Scott Parker	Jacobs Edwards & Kelcey
Alan Meyers	Cambridge Systematics
Rick Crawford	Norfolk Southern
James Massarelli	J. H. Cohn
Elizabeth Cox	N.J. Research & Information Service
Robert Marculina	New Jersey Environmental Protection Agency
William Fidurski	Coalition to Stop the Freight Train
Jim Snyder	IEW Construction Group
Dolores Buckenberger	Tran Systems Lichtenstein
Ronald S. Weening	Anne Strauss-Wieder, Inc.
Hilda Lafebre	Private consultant
Anne Strauss-Wieder	Anne Strauss-Wieder, Inc.

Josh Curley	NJIT
Tony Giobbe	CSX Transportation
Richard Brundage	NJ Turnpike Authority
Stewart Weiss	Inman RR Committee
Sam Crane	MAHRR Terminals
Walter Lane	Somerset County
Ed Bolden	Wilbur Smith Assoc.
Doug Rubin	Moffatt & Nichol
Suzanne Mack	Jersey City Redevelopment Agency
Jeffrey Wilkerson	Plan Smart NJ
Joel Weiner	Central Staff
Karen Shannon	Central Staff
Mark Solof	Central Staff
Ted Matthews	Central Staff
Lois Goldman	Central Staff
Dave Dawson	Central Staff
Ted Ritter	Central Staff
Keith Miller	Central Staff
Sascha Brathwaite	Central Staff
Beverly Morris	Central Staff