

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

**DANIEL P. SULLIVAN, CHAIRMAN**

**MINUTES**  
**November 20, 2006**

**The NJTPA Office**  
**One Newark Center, 17<sup>th</sup> floor**  
**Newark, NJ 07102**  
**1:00 P.M.**

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**A. Open Public Meetings Act Compliance** - Chairman Daniel P. Sullivan opened the meeting and advised 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, the New Jersey Herald News, and the Times Observer and posted in the Essex County Administration Building, Newark, New Jersey, and on the bulletin board of the Secretary of State, Trenton, New Jersey.

## **B. Salute to the Flag**

Chairman Sullivan led the Board of Trustees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **C. Roll Call**

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

## **D. Approval of Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting was made by Jersey City and seconded by Ocean County. The minutes were approved with fifteen affirmative votes. Sussex County abstained.

## **E. Chairman's Remarks**

Chairman Sullivan said he was happy to report that all NJTPA board members who ran for re-election will continue in their posts, and that voters approved the ballot measure to expand dedication of the state's gas tax for transportation purposes. He said that the most pressing issue in the field of transportation is balancing the demands of economic development with the need to make the region's communities and transportation system work more efficiently.

On the subject of Smart Growth, the Chairman said the concept encompasses a host of measures and strategies that must be tailored to the particular needs and physical realities of the locations where it is applied. He said the region's highways and rail lines must be improved to accommodate the increasing numbers of people and growing volumes of freight on which the region's economy depends. Chairman Sullivan pointed out that some counties around the state

are taking on these challenges. He noted the following Smart Growth strategies employed in his home county of Union:

- The county is reclaiming properties and assets left over from the state's industrial past. The county has worked with the City of Elizabeth to create a hotel and a conference and retail complex that includes the Jersey Gardens Mall on once-derelict brownfield properties near the port and airport. He noted the development was made possible by a newly created road network.
- Union County also is pursuing Smart Growth in conjunction with its commuter rail assets. A study is underway to explore Transit Oriented Development near stations along the Raritan Valley Line. Forums were held in October where citizens could help in defining how development should occur and what it should look like. The Chairman said it may take some time, but the stations are poised to become the anchors for new mixed use development that will give residents new travel and lifestyle options.
- The county also is working to create a freight village of warehouses and distribution centers at the former industrial area of Tremley Point. The Chairman noted that transportation – including a new connection to the New Jersey Turnpike – will be an essential ingredient of this effort.

Chairman Sullivan said that efforts to reclaim brownfields as a Smart Growth strategy bring jobs and economic activity close to densely populated urban areas. He said they relieve development pressures on open space elsewhere in the region, and they reduce the length of auto and truck trips over congested highways. The Chairman said that each year the NJTPA adds to its experience in making Smart Growth a reality and is shaping its project mix and using its study programs to bolster the transportation-Smart Growth connection. Chairman Sullivan noted that, at the state level, NJDOT has refashioned how it goes about designing and implementing projects to explicitly consider land use and Smart Growth, as would be the subject of the key discussion issue by Gary Toth, NJDOT, later in the meeting.

## **F. Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Joel Weiner reported that Central Staff convened a workshop earlier that morning for RTAC members and partner agencies to continue to assist in the NJTPA Strategy Evaluation study. He said that attendance was good and representatives from most of the subregions, NJDOT, NJ Transit, the Office of Smart Growth (OSG), New York Metropolitan Transportation Commission (NYMTC), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) participated.

Mr. Weiner explained that Strategy Evaluation is the NJTPA's central "performance-based" planning analysis, which generates accessibility and mobility improvements for the region. He said it underpins the development of the Regional Transportation Plan and fulfills congestion management process requirements mandated under SAFETEA-LU, the federal transportation legislation enacted in 2005. Mr. Weiner said important matters were discussed at the workshop, including how effectively our transportation system functions; what characteristics – such as reliability, access to centers, or public transit – are most important for which types of places in the region; and how to identify performance targets that should be aimed for. Mr. Weiner said

that, based on the results of the discussion, Central Staff will apply data and modeling to begin to estimate "needs" – identifying places throughout the region where the Board would want to direct limited transportation resources. Central Staff will directly engage the Trustees at this stage, giving the Board a chance to assess and refine information gleaned from technical analysis. Mr. Weiner said that, in the coming months, staff will shift the focus towards finding those strategies and actions that can address the needs that are identified.

Mr. Weiner reported that another significant area of work by Central Staff is to ensure that the NJTPA's planning products are in compliance with the provisions of SAFETEA-LU by July 1, 2007. He said the NJTPA has carefully re-examined its Regional Transportation Plan and the larger planning process in light of the new law, which is reflected in draft planning regulations issued by USDOT. These planning regulations are scheduled to be released in final form in January. Mr. Wiener noted that in most areas, the adopted plan and TIP are fully in compliance with SAFETEA-LU. However, he said, there is work that must be done by next spring to ensure that all aspects of our planning process and the long-range plan itself reflect the new requirements. Mr. Weiner said that Central Staff is preparing a supplement to the plan that will include additional information about environmental mitigation strategies in the region, transportation security and other factors. Mr. Weiner also said that the NJTPA will develop a new Public Participation Plan as required by SAFETEA-LU. It will be one of the key products of a consultant effort just underway that also will evaluate the agency's public participation and make recommendations for improvements. He said that these items would be presented to the Board of Trustees in the spring so that the agency can submit them to its federal partners well in advance of the July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline.

Mr. Weiner reported also that Central Staff has been crafting the Fiscal Year 2008 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which guides the planning work of Central Staff and the subregions for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007. He said the NJTPA has received input from NJDOT, NJ Transit and the federal funding partners. Also, the agency's plans were shared and discussed with neighboring MPOs. Presentations were made at the last round of Committee meetings and their approval will be sought next month. Board approval will take place at the March meeting, after a public comment period.

Mr. Weiner said that, while most of the UPWP is made up of mandated activities, such as developing the TIP and overseeing air quality conformity, the work program being proposed includes a variety of new initiatives. A few significant ones include:

- Completing the Strategy Evaluation effort, which will include handing off priority strategies and concepts for further development and eventual inclusion in the TIP;
- Improving public participation activities, including establishing a new Citizen's Committee composed of regional stakeholders;
- Following up on the current Environmental Justice study to improve the ways in which the needs of traditionally underserved populations are identified and addressed;
- Initiating work on the next iteration of the long-range plan, which is now on a 4-year cycle, including examining future scenarios for the region's development and their economic implications;

- Assessing and reporting on the impacts of specific implemented projects as a way of monitoring our regional performance;
- Applying the soon-to-be-completed Enhanced North Jersey Regional Transportation Model to planning work carried out by both Central Staff and the subregions;
- Completing corridor studies now underway, including Bus Rapid Transit Studies focusing on Route 1 and the Greater New Brunswick area, as well as the Newark-Elizabeth Bus Study;
- Addressing the needs and recommendations identified in the Truck Stop Study and the Rail Crossing Study being undertaken this year; and
- Building on successful efforts in the area of safety and bicycle/pedestrian planning – including helping the subregions advance projects in both areas.

Mr. Weiner also noted an additional major initiative that will directly involve Board members: the updating of the 5-year Strategic Business Plan. He said this will require the Trustees' participation in a series of workshops and roundtable discussions. He said the organization's goals and vision, as well as the work that is done on a day-to-day basis, will be on the table. He invited the Trustees' suggestions and comments on this and all other initiatives in the proposed FY 2008 UPWP.

Following Mr. Weiner's report, Chairman Sullivan presented resolution plaques honoring Freeholder Nancy Palladino (Hunterdon County) and retiring freeholders Cecelia Laureys (Morris County) and Theodore Narozanick (Monmouth County) in recognition of their contributions and achievements as members of the NJTPA Board of Trustees.

Additionally, as a former NJTPA chairman and long-standing member of the Board, Freeholder Narozanick was presented with gifts and words of tribute for his many years of distinguished service to Monmouth County and the NJTPA from Jerry Keenan of the New Jersey Alliance for Action and Rich Roberts of NJ Transit. Jim Lewis, NJDOT, read a letter of appreciation to Freeholder Narozanick from the Department's Commissioner, Kris Kolluri .

## **G. Committee Reports/Action Items**

- **Project Prioritization – Freeholder Susan Zellman, Chairman**

Freeholder Zellman reported that the Committee considered one action item at its October meeting. It involved approval of a series of modifications to the FY 2007-2010 TIP. She said Central Staff reported that two projects show an immediate need for additional funds:

- The Route 280, Garden State Parkway, Interchange 145 project in Essex County needs an additional \$2.2 million for consultant inspection services, and
- The Route 17, Essex Street Bridge in Bergen County needs an additional \$6 million in FY 2008 because of increased construction materials costs.

The Freeholder said two projects would serve as funding resources for these projects in order to maintain fiscal constraint:

- \$2.2 million would be reprogrammed from The Routes 3 and 46, Valley Road and Notch/Rifle Camp Road Interchange in Passaic County. The project is being re-scoped and will not be ready for Final Design until FY 2008.
- \$8 million in FY 2010 funds can be moved from the Route 3, Passaic River Crossing in Bergen and Passaic Counties without impacting the project schedule. Those funds would be restored in FY 2011.

The Committee approved of the modifications, and no further Board action was required.

Freeholder Zellman reported that the Committee also considered an action item involving approval of a Program Change to the FY 2007 NJTPA Local Safety Program. She said that \$670,000 was programmed for three intersections in Irvington, and urgent safety needs compelled Essex County to fund those projects from its own resources. The Freeholder explained that the County requested that the funds be reprogrammed to three other badly needed intersection improvement projects in the same corridor. The Committee recommended approval of the action item by the Board.

The Freeholder said that Central Staff updated the Committee on the status of the reevaluation of the Local Scoping Program. She said that the successful program is facing a huge deficit in FY 2008, and solutions must be found to reduce the intake of projects, refine the administration of the program and prioritize Local Scoping graduates about to enter the project pool. She said the Committee agreed to consider funding scenarios developed by Central Staff at its next meeting. She noted that Central Staff has been reaching out to local project managers and engineers for recommendations on improving the program.

Freeholder Zellman also reported that Central Staff updated the Committee on the progress of the Project Prioritization Criteria Update. The project has advanced to the stage where weights can be applied to the updated criteria for project scoring purposes. She said the Committee expects to consider approval of the updated criteria at its December meeting for action by the Board in January. Upon approval, Central Staff will apply the updated criteria to projects in the FY 2008 Project Pool.

**Action Item 1: Approval of a Program Change to the FY 2007 NJTPA Local Safety Program** (Attachment 2)

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

- **Planning and Economic Development – Freeholder John DiMaio, Chairman**

Freeholder DiMaio reported that the Committee considered one action item at its October meeting. It involved a series of amendments to the FY 2007 Project Development Work Program (PDWP). The amendments, which were requested by NJDOT, are as follows:

1. Removal of the Route 1 Utility Corridor Trail project in Middlesex County. Public Service Electric & Gas would not allow the project on its right of way property due to safety and security concerns.
2. Removal of the Route 9 and Route 532 Wells Mills Road Intersection Improvements project in Ocean County. This segment of the Route 9 Integrated Transportation and Land Use Study is being postponed until projections show a greater need for the improvement.
3. Removal of the Route 3 and Route 46, Valley Road and Notch/Rifle Camp Road Interchange project in Passaic County. The project has advanced into the TIP for final design.
4. Removal of the Route 46 and Route 23, I-80 Connector in Passaic County. A cost benefit analysis has shown that moving forward with this project at this time cannot be justified.
5. Refinement of the Route 29 Guiderail Project from Shudders Falls to Frenchtown in Hunterdon County. Two breakout projects would replace the original project in the PDWP.
6. Restoration of the Route 35, Heards Brook Drainage Improvement project in Middlesex County to the PDWP for the Preliminary Design phase in FY 2007. The project previously had been removed from the PDWP because of a delay in its schedule.

Freeholder DiMaio also reported that Central Staff provided an update on the status of the Walkable Communities Workshop Program. He said workshops to identify measures that will help towns support increased walking trips would be held in each of the NJTPA's 15 subregions (as of November 20<sup>th</sup>, 14 workshops were held). Planners, engineers, local officials – including Board members and mayors – and pedestrian advocates participated.

The Freeholder said that Central Staff also reported on the activities of the North Jersey Deer Vehicle Crash Coalition. The group's goal is to reduce the frequency and severity of deer-car crashes in the region. He said that the NJTPA, the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety and other coalition members are engaged in a vigorous public outreach campaign. The Freeholder noted that 50,000 brochures and 2,000 trunk magnets are being distributed throughout the region, and two public service radio announcements are running.

Central Staff also updated the Committee on the progress of the latest Strategy Evaluation study, which features a new, simplified approach focusing on how transportation strategies can best serve the needs of different "place types" in the region, from rural areas to the dense urban core. He said Central Staff and RTAC have been working diligently on the Strategy Evaluation, and Central Staff will discuss identified needs with the Board early next year in order to get valuable Trustee input on this important effort.

**Action Item 2: Approval of Seven Amendments to the FY 2007 PDWP (Attachment 3)**

Tom Drabic, Sussex County, asked for more information about one amendment, involving removal of the Rte. 46 & Rte. 23 Interstate 80 Connector (“the connector”) from the PDWP. Hamilton Meghdir, Central Staff, explained that the connector is one component of the various improvements planned for “the spaghetti bowl.” Many short-term improvements have been completed or are under way. He noted that a long-term project is planned that will address a 600-foot span of the area. He said the level of accidents there is well below the state average, and there is no justification for so costly a ramp as the connector, when so many of the other improvements will negate the need for it. Also, NJDOT has planned construction of two more major ramps, which are more critical to Passaic County and Wayne Township.

George Ververides, Middlesex County, expressed concern over another amendment that would remove the Route 1 Utility Corridor Trail (“the trail”), a bicycle/pedestrian project, from the PDWP. Public Service Gas & Electric would not allow use of their right-of-way property for the project because of safety and security issues. Mr. Ververides reported that the County had written to NJDOT asking for alternatives for implementing the project, which would create bicycle/pedestrian amenities in Edison and Woodbridge Townships. Mr. Ververides said Middlesex County would vote no on the action item because of the change to this project. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that the resolution would be revised to withdraw the trail amendment, which would be considered at a subsequent PPC meeting.

A motion to approve the resolution without the trail amendment was made by Warren County, seconded by Somerset County and carried unanimously.

- **Freight Initiatives – Freeholder Peter Palmer, Chairman**

Freeholder Palmer reported that, at the September meeting of the NJTPA Freight Initiatives Committee, members discussed the ongoing work of the regional truck rest stop consultant study. Also discussed were the purpose and scope of work for a pending request for proposals for a study of rail grade crossings on three key rail lines in the region.

The Freeholder reported that the truck rest stop stakeholders group convened immediately after the Freight Committee meeting to review work performed by the study’s consultants. He said a 24-hour survey was conducted of traffic at official truck rest stops as well as unofficial truck parking locations such as weigh stations, highway shoulders and other spots. These locations were mapped and quantified. The stakeholder group also reviewed the content of two industry surveys that will be conducted as part of the study’s outreach effort. One will be a direct phone survey of key companies and industry representatives; the other is an online survey on the NJTPA web site that allows truck drivers to participate directly in identifying their needs for rest services. Freeholder Palmer noted that an article is being planned for publication in the League of Municipalities magazine that will give a general overview of the issue.

Freeholder Palmer reported that he attended a port inspection tour sponsored by the Sandy Hook Pilot’s Association, which guides the entrance and departure of over 5,000 large ships per year into our harbor. The tour reviewed port operations and important security issues. He also attended a port industry day featuring remarks by transportation commissioner Kris Kolluri and port leaders on the state of the industry in the region. The Freeholder also announced that in

addition to his participation in the Liberty Corridor Advisory Council, he will now be active in Nation's Port, a coalition promoting the vitality of the Ports of New York and New Jersey.

The Freeholder announced that the next Freight Initiatives Committee meeting would be held on November 28<sup>th</sup>, and it will be followed by another meeting of the Truck Rest Stop Study stakeholders. He said any interested persons were welcome to attend.

#### **H. Key Discussion Issue – NJDOT's New Approach for Congestion Relief**

Gary Toth, NJDOT Director of Project Planning and Development, reported that the agency is working with the Office of Smart Growth (OSG) to implement strategies to reduce traffic congestion around the state. He said that interstate highways built in the 1950s cannot keep up with the state's increasing traffic. The percentage of the major roadway system that is congested has risen from 34 percent in 1982 to 59 percent in 2003. Mr. Toth noted that the estimated cost of relieving congestion in New Jersey would be \$38 billion, while the revenue available for addressing congestion is \$150 million per year.

Mr. Toth said that key factors leading to increased congestion include separated and spread out land use; intentional disconnect design in residential streets, such as the *cul de sac*; widening roads, which promotes sprawl; roads built for automobile rather than pedestrian use; and accelerated population growth.

Mr. Toth outlined a new approach to the problem. Its principles are as follows:

- Downsize state highway expansions
- Leverage private sector investment
- Promote network connectivity
- Help communities with land use design
- Assist with context sensitive street design

Mr. Toth stressed that it is critical for NJDOT, NJTPA and others to work with OSG to develop smart approaches that won't increase congestion. He said NJDOT seeks to work with developers and municipalities to include connectivity in land use design. He noted that improved connectivity can also be accomplished in already developed areas.

#### **I) Information Item: Walkable Communities Workshops**

Bettina Zimny, Director of Planning, The RBA Group, updated the Board on the progress of the Walkable Communities project in the region. Participants in the project include the NJTPA, National Center for Bicycling & Walking, the region's 13 Counties and two major cities, elected officials, local residents, county and municipal professionals/staff and business and school representatives. The project involves a series of workshops, one in each subregion. After an initial orientation, participants tour chosen locations identified as problem areas for pedestrians. After the walking tour the workshop reconvenes and field observations and possible solutions are discussed. At the time of the Board meeting, 14 of 15 workshops had been conducted around the region. Ms. Zimny reported that the workshops were well-attended and enthusiastically received.

Ms. Zimny said four priorities for the program were identified:

- Reduce vehicle speeds
- Increase pedestrian visibility
- Increase pedestrian crossing time
- Repair, widen and install sidewalks

Ms. Zimny said that deliverables planned for the project include: individual workshop summaries with site-specific recommendations and a record of participants' comments, a final report, and a presentation to the NJTPA Board featuring universal ideas that emerged from the workshops, unique conditions and sample recommendations. The individual workshop summaries will be shared among the subregions. The counties will be asked to report their Walkable Communities activities to the NJTPA.

## **J) Public Participation**

William Wright, New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers, read from a statement that called for the restoration of unused passenger and freight rail lines and the expansion of lines currently in use. He said too many resources are directed at roadway expansion at the expense of rail. Mr. Wright pointed out that failure to expand the once statewide rail transit network has resulted in increased road traffic, pollution, energy waste and the "disenfranchising" of riders who cannot or will not drive. Mr. Wright expressed appreciation to Freeholder Palmer for the NJTPA's work to expand the freight rail system.

Stewart Weiss, Chairman of the Inman Railroad Committee, asked who is informing Governor Corzine about the forecasted increase of freight arriving at the region's port and its ramifications for New Jersey's already congested roadways and blocked and dangerous railroad grade crossings. Mr. Weiss reiterated his call for the creation of a separate, high speed, freight rail system for the state.

Mr. Weiss distributed a set of documents including a copy of his letter to the NJTPA summarizing his September 11<sup>th</sup> comments to the Board on these subjects; a Federal Railroad Administration report on blocked highway-rail grade crossings; Port of New York/New Jersey Trade Statistics from 1991-2005, a copy of an agreement dated April 27, 2004 between the PANYNJ and NJDOT on the use of \$25 million for rail improvement projects in New Jersey; and copies of newspaper articles about two recent catastrophic at-grade rail crossing accidents.

Albert Cafiero, Senator Cardinale's Office, said that NJ Transit is setting policy without following NJTPA procedures, and he described the proposed HBLR Secaucus-Meadowlands Connector as illegal for that reason. Mr. Cafiero said the people in eastern Bergen County need an extension to Bayonne and Tenafly, but NJ Transit wants to divert an extension of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail through Secaucus to Xanadu. Mr. Cafiero called on the Board to remove the extension to the Meadowlands from the TIP until it is approved by the NJTPA Board of Trustees.

Lennie Nix, Hackensack, New Jersey expressed his concern about recent developments at the Meadowlands. He said Bergen County is spending a great deal of funds while there is lack of cooperation among its municipalities. He also claimed that Xanadu and the developer, EnCap,

are having significant financial problems, and that neither entity has responded to his queries about the situation. Mr. Nix said there are many great ideas for infrastructure improvements in Bergen County, but many of them are aimed in different directions. He said the biggest problem is still political corruption.

**K) Time and place of next meeting**

Chairman Sullivan announced that the next meeting of the NJTPA will be held on Monday January 8, 2007 at 1:00 PM at the NJTPA offices at One Newark Center, Newark, NJ.

**L) Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:48 p.m. by unanimous verbal acclaim.