

NORTH JERSEY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AUTHORITY, INC.

PROJECT PRIORITIZATION COMMITTEE

FREEHOLDER SUSAN ZELLMAN, CHAIRMAN
COUNTY EXECUTIVE DENNIS McNERNEY, VICE CHAIRMAN

Minutes

December 17, 2007

I. Roll Call of Members

Freeholder Zellman called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m. There were nine voting members present. One more arrived after approval of the minutes.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 22nd minutes was made by Ocean County, seconded by Middlesex County and carried with eight affirmative votes. NJ Transit abstained. Sue Dziamara, Hunterdon County, noted for the record that the County was represented at the meeting by Crystal Barnes, which was not reflected in the minutes. The minutes have since been revised accordingly.

III Presentation: The Draft FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Prior to the presentation, Action Item Number Three, which concerned a project in Warren County, was presented to accommodate Planning and Economic Development Committee Chairman Freeholder John DiMaio, whose committee had met earlier that day. (See p. 4.)

Following the action item, Cliff Sobel, Central Staff, reported on the development of the Draft FY 2009 UPWP. He explained that most of the 33 tasks in Volume I of the UPWP are federally mandated. He provided an overview of several new initiatives for the program, noting that some of them will be the next phases of efforts started in FY 2008. Mr. Sobel highlighted the following initiatives:

- 2035 Regional Transportation Plan update and visioning;
- Exploration of energy issues and strategies for greenhouse gas reduction;
- Completion of Strategy Evaluation and its advancement into the Project Development Work Program (PDWP);
- Finalization of recommendations from the Regional Safety Priorities Project;
- Advancement of three bus studies in coordination with NJ Transit: the Northwest New Jersey Bus Study, the final year of the Newark Elizabeth Bus Study, and a new Passaic/Bergen Bus Study;
- Advancement of recommendations from the Rail Freight Grade Crossing Study and the Truck Rest Stop Study;

- Monitoring of the 10 Liberty Corridor Program projects recently approved by the Board;
- Commencement of a consultant effort to determine the feasibility of using waterborne freight movement services to reduce truck traffic;
- Follow-up on recommendations from a soon to be released report on the region's 27 general airports; and
- Update of the NJTPA Strategic Business Plan.

Following Mr. Sobel's remarks, Liz DeRuchie, Central Staff, reported on recent developments for the UPWP Volume II, Subregional Transportation Program (STP), and Volume III, Subregional Studies Program (SSP). She distributed a draft of program guidelines for the FY 2009 STP program. Ms. DeRuchie said that a recent Central Staff/RTAC working group formed to review the program solicitation process developed improvements to simplify the process and make it more reflective of the work accomplished by the individual subregions. Ms. DeRuchie noted that some tasks in the program were made elective to accommodate the diversity of interests among the subregions. Regarding the SSP, Ms. DeRuchie said this program continues existing work such as the Technical Library service, internship program, subregional studies support, and training programs.

Referring to the handout, Freeholder Zellman called attention to one of the elective tasks in the STP concerning the Highlands. She said that the entire region – not only specific counties – should be concerned about policies and procedures related to the Highlands Master Plan. Ms. DeRuchie said that the NJTPA, in its role as a regional MPO, has had strong input into the Highlands planning process.

Mary Ameen, Central Staff, reported that the Commission has released a final draft Master Plan that takes into account previously received public comments, including those of the NJTPA. She said the plan will be reviewed; a series of three public hearings will be conducted; and the NJTPA will participate in the public comment process and route staff's comments through the Project Prioritization Committee (PPC). Freeholder Zellman asked to be notified of the schedule for the hearings, noting that the NJTPA itself might want to be represented in addition to the counties directly affected by the Highlands Master Plan. She noted that consistency is needed in how Central Staff's approach to the issue reflects that of the PPC. She requested that staff report back at the next meeting. (The dates of the public hearings are February 6, 11 and 13.)

Karen Shannon, Central Staff, pointed out that Ms. DeRuchie's presentation was specific to Volume II of the UPWP and that the concept of elective tasks responds to RTAC's stated concerns about improving the STP solicitation process. She said that agency-wide, Central Staff-led tasks related to the Highlands Commission are included in Volume I, providing an opportunity for all subregions to participate. Cliff Sobel, Central Staff, noted that staff worked with the six counties in developing the comments, and is now reviewing the final draft of the Master Plan.

Freeholder Zellman also noted the importance of enhanced collaboration with the Department of Environmental Protection as well as NJDOT. She said this has to be a priority for the region, not just the six counties in the Highlands designated area. Ms. Shannon pointed out that such collaboration is planned for in Volume I.

The next element of the UPWP presentation concerned the draft FY 2009 budget. Ms. Shannon reported that the \$10,027,314 in planning funding derives from PL funds from SAFETEA-LU and matching local funds. With the aid of a six-page handout, she guided the Committee members through a breakdown of the data covering FY 2009 revenues and expenditures and the subregional support budget.

IV Action Items

1. Approval of a Series of Modifications to the FY 2008 – 2011 TIP

Eve Chamberlain, Central Staff, reported that NJDOT is requesting a series of modifications to meet the changing requirements of eight projects in the FY 2008 – 2011 TIP:

- Routes 1&9 T, St. Paul's Avenue/Conrail Bridge, Hudson County
- Routes 1&9 Pulaski Skyway, Interim Repairs, Contract 1, Hudson and Essex Counties
- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), various counties
- Route 80, Rockfall Mitigation, Roxbury Township, Morris County
- Route 27, Renaissance 2000, Bennetts Lane to Somerset Street, Middlesex and Somerset Counties
- Routes 183/46, NJ Transit Bridge/Netcong Circle, Morris County
- Route 9, Pohatcong Lake Dam, Ocean County
- Train Preemption for Traffic Signals – North II, various counties

Ms. Chamberlain said that two projects would serve as resources for the needed funding. Funds for both were programmed in FY 2008, but the projects were advanced and funded in FY 2007, so the FY 2008 funds were available for reallocation. The two projects are:

- Route 17, Essex Street Bridge, Bergen County
- Route 18, Route 1 to Northeast Corridor Amtrak Line north of Route 27, Middlesex County

She noted that no projects would be negatively affected by the action.

A motion to approve the modifications was made by Middlesex County, seconded by Ocean County, and carried with nine affirmative votes, NJ Transit abstained.

2. Approval of the FY 2009 Project Pool/Project Ranking and Scoring

Kevin Twine, Central Staff, outlined the process of advancing candidate projects from the initial Project Pool to the Capital Construction Program to the TIP. He noted that, unlike the Capital Construction Program, the Project Pool is not fiscally constrained. Mr. Twine reported that Central Staff scored and ranked 36 of 40 projects in the Project Pool using the updated project prioritization criteria. The subregions were provided the opportunity to review and challenge the scores. He said that the remaining four projects were scored in previous years and had already undergone the challenge round process.

Mr. Twine explained that the resolution asks the Board to take three actions:

- Approve the project ranking of new candidate pool projects that had been provided to the Committee prior to meeting,
- Authorize NJTPA Staff to use the project rankings in negotiations of the FY 2009 Capital Construction Program, and
- Authorize the PPC to enter into negotiations with NJDOT and NJ Transit on the Capital Construction Program and the development of the FY 2009 TIP.

Sue Dziamara, Hunterdon County, said previously agreed upon changes in scores for two projects in Hunterdon County were not evident in the document before the Committee. The document was edited to reflect the agreed-upon changes during the meeting. The revised document was distributed to the PPC members before the vote was taken. Ms. Dziamara said that while she appreciates the adjustment she is concerned that the two projects ranked in the bottom five. She said that the serious safety problems the projects are designed to address should have resulted in higher ranking. Mr. Twine noted that of the elements considered in ranking projects, safety carries 25 percent.

During the general discussion, Freeholder Zellman recalled a previous presentation on noise barriers and inquired if any policy on the subject had been developed. She asked Jerry Mooney, NJDOT, to update the committee at the next meeting on the status of any policy making activity concerning noise barriers.

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

3. Approval of a Modification to the FY 2008-2011 TIP

(Note: This item was discussed earlier in the meeting at the request of Freeholder DiMaio of Warren County – see p. 1) Eve Chamberlain, Central Staff, reported that the bridge over Pohatcong Creek on County Route 623/Brass Castle Road project in Warren County requires \$1 million in additional funding due to increases in construction costs. She said that there are funds available in the NJTPA Project Development line item that can be used for this purpose. It was noted that reallocation of \$1 million from the line item to the bridge project would not have an adverse effect on any project. Freeholder DiMaio elaborated briefly on the nature of the additional costs.

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

V. Information Items

1. Local Scoping Reevaluation Update

Sascha Brathwaite, Central Staff, reported that the Local Scoping Reevaluation working group met earlier that month and discussed the main issues surrounding the reevaluation: program administration, project development, and future funding needs. Ms. Brathwaite said the group had requested a meeting with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) toward the end of January to bring to their attention the program's challenges and the viability of possible solutions developed by the working group.

2. Update on NJTPA Participation on NJDOT's Capital Program Committee

Martin Hofler, Central Staff, reported that Central Staff had attended two meetings of NJDOT's Capital Program Committee and gained insight into its decision-making process, which he said is very technical in nature. The NJTPA had been invited to participate in a non-voting capacity and asked to provide input into the process before decisions are made about the disposition of certain projects in the region. Mr. Hofler said that such participation will establish a way to relay project-level information to affected subregions. Mr. Hofler said Central Staff will continue to keep the Committee apprised of this process.

3. Reallocation of Non-Federal Funds Programmed for Projects in the NJTPA Region

Mr. Hofler reported that FHWA informed NJDOT that it does not consider the funds pledged by the New Jersey Turnpike Authority for the Route I-78, Garden State Parkway, Interchange 142 project to be "available and committed." For this reason federal funds for the project would not be authorized. He said that as a result NJDOT reallocated \$70 million from seven state-funded projects in the TIP to the interchange project so it could move forward.

During the considerable discussion that followed the announcement, Tom Wospil, NJDOT, stressed that the cost sharing agreement between the Turnpike and NJDOT will be honored. He said funding taken from the seven projects would be replaced by the Turnpike Authority by the time it will be needed, either with a lump sum or annual payments. The Committee engaged in considerable discussion regarding its concern that the funds be returned to the region. It was decided that, although the NJTPA has no authority over state funds, the PPC would send a letter to Commissioner Kolluri expressing its concerns.

A motion to send a letter to NJDOT Commissioner Kolluri expressing the Committee's concern over the reallocation of \$70 million in state funds from seven projects in the TIP was made by Middlesex County, seconded by Ocean County and carried unanimously.

4. Development of the FY 2009 Capital Construction Program

Ann Ludwig, Central Staff, reported that the Capital Construction Program (CCP) and the TIP cycles will extend to 10 years instead of four. She said that staff would look for guidance from the PPC concerning how the projects will be arrayed in the TIP.

Ms. Ludwig said staff anticipates receipt of the draft CCP database in mid-January and commencement of negotiations with the subregions in February. She noted that the schedule of the CCP development depends on many factors within NJDOT. Mr. Wospil described the sequence of steps for moving the CCP from the NJDOT Capital Investment Strategy office to the Commissioner to the Governor for review and comment before providing the database to the NJTPA. Mr. Wospil noted that of the 10 years in the TIP cycle, the first four are fiscally constrained; the rest are not.

5. I-78 Resurfacing Project in Hunterdon County

Ms. Ludwig reported that Central Staff received an email from William Harclerode, in which he advocated on behalf of the Union Township Environmental Committee concerning the following:

- Advancing the schedule of the planned resurfacing of I-78 between Exits 11 and 18, due to its deteriorated condition;
- Using low-noise asphalt during the repaving due to resident complaints about road noise; and
- Including ways to reduce truck traffic on that section of I-78 in future planning, i.e. more use of rail for freight movement in the area.

On behalf of a representative from Union Township who could not be present, Ms. Dziamara elaborated on the issues in Mr. Harclerode's email and asked also for suggestions for preventing the grinding noise caused by trucks braking and down-shifting as they go downhill. Mr. Wospil mentioned rubberized asphalt and said he would look into options for signage about braking noise. Freeholder Zellman suggested that Ms. Dziamara work with Mr. Wospil and Mr. Hofler to research possible solutions for noise mitigation in that stretch of I-78 (mileposts 10 to 18).

George Ververides inquired about the status of high priority resurfacing that the Board voted to fund two years ago. It was noted that the resurfacing of I-78 was at the top of that list of projects and is slated for FY 2009. Mr. Hofler suggested that, if funding can be identified, a TIP modification may get the project advanced. A brief general discussion ensued.

VI. Next Steps

- Central Staff to update the Committee on strategies and activities related to a regional approach to input into the Highlands Commission Master Plan
- NJDOT to update the Committee on the progress of any policy making activities regarding noise barriers

VII. Adjournment

At 1:00 p.m. a motion to adjourn was made by Middlesex County, seconded by Ocean County and carried unanimously.

Project Prioritization Committee
ATTENDANCE
December 17, 2007

VOTING MEMBERS	
Freeholder Susan Zellman, Chairman	Sussex County
Freeholder Daniel Sullivan	Union County
Donna Orbach	Bergen County
John Lane	Hudson County
Dick Lane	Ocean County
Sue Dziamara	Hunterdon County
George Ververides	Middlesex County
Sayed Moafi	Monmouth County
Jeremy Colangelo-Bryan	NJ Transit
Jerry Mooney	NJDOT
O T H E R S	
Tom Drabic	Sussex County
Brian Wahler	NJ Turnpike
Jim Berzok	NJDOT
Deena Cybulski	Morris County
Ed Bolden	Wilbur Smith Associates
Liza Betz	Union County
Thomas A. Wospil	NJDOT
Ken Aloisio	Bergen County
Walt Lane	Somersset County
Kamal Saleh	Union County
Joel Weiner	Central Staff
Karen Shannon	Central Staff
Cliff Sobel	Central Staff
Martin Hofler	Central Staff
Mark Solof	Central Staff
Mary Ameen	Central Staff
Tracy Lockhart	Central Staff
Ann Ludwig	Central Staff
Sascha Brathwaite	Central Staff
Eve Chamberlain	Central Staff
Liz DeRuchie	Central Staff
Kevin Twine	Central Staff
Beverly Morris	Central Staff