



Meeting Summary

Public Meetings NJTPA Regional Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

As part of the public involvement effort for the NJTPA's Regional Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, two public meetings were held during the public comment period (from X to Y). Below is a summary of these two meetings.

March 26, 2008

Middlesex County Planning Board Offices, New Brunswick, NJ

2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Attendees:

Liz DeRuchie	NJTPA
Marlene Connor	Wilbur Smith
Jim McLaughlin	Wilbur Smith
Melissa Budsock	Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates
Walter Cherwony	Abrams-Cherwony & Associates
Jamie Andreski	NJ TRANSIT
Hope Hezel	Morris Area Paratransit
William Neary	Keep Middlesex Moving (KMM)
Cynthia Mapp	DHS
George Ververides	Middlesex County Planning Department

Introductions and Meeting Overview: Marlene Connor welcomed the group. The attendees then introduced themselves. Marlene explained that the purpose of the meeting was to:

- Give everyone an overview of the planning process of the NJTPA Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan.
- Review the development of the draft Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan that the NJTPA board will adopt on May 12, 2008.

Presentation: Marlene then made a presentation to the group. She reviewed the steps in developing the plan, the process of meeting with the stakeholders, holding county meetings, and holding 3 different focus groups throughout North Jersey. Marlene reviewed the regional themes with the group explaining that these were issues that arose during the research phase. Below is a summary of comments received during the presentation.

Question: How difficult is the task of this coordination? Can you picture all of these ideas possibly working together one day?

Answer: Yes, the NJTPA is already ahead of the game and what will force everyone to work together will be a lack of resources. Hopefully we will not come to a "crisis" mode before this happens.

Comment: There is no access to transportation if there are no jobs.



Answer: There are certain things that counties need to do internally and then work with each municipality depending on where the counties are. A whole new generation of people will need to be re-educated.

Comment: Morris County is at a crossroads at what they are doing with their paratransit access. They are training on new systems and have just moved their office to a more centralized area. The county is looking to set up a good foundation to grow and maybe later share information/work with municipalities.

Comment: The comprehensive disabilities grant was mentioned by DHS. The representative then went on to say how NJFUNDARIDE.org takes a lot of coordination from different entities.

Comment: NJ TRANSIT made a comment that funds are being cut all over and that this is a big issue that all of the counties are trying to work out.

Answer: Marlene Connor responded that money will drive the forces over the next couple of years.

Comment: Are municipalities' and counties willing to coordinate? I think this is going to be a big challenge. I do not think that the counties and municipalities are ready to work together but the budget may soon be forced to share. Another challenge is to provide good, on-time transportation. An outreach program should also be established. "A lot of people do not have access to computers to go on Web sites."

March 27, 2008

Housing Partnership, Dover, NJ

2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Attendees:

Liz DeRuchie	NJTPA
Marlene Connor	Wilbur Smith
Jim McLaughlin	Wilbur Smith
Maura Fitzpatrick	Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates
Walter Cherwony	Abrams-Cherwony & Associates
Susan Zellman	NJTPA/Sussex County Freeholder
Gary Johnson	Citizen
John McGill	Passaic County
Marc Molde	Dawn Center for Independent Living
Carol Novrit	Sussex County DSS
Jeff Bashe	Transoptions
Peter Vaughan	Warren County
Roberta Mosely	Citizen
Betsy Toule	Sussex County DSS
Judy VanderPlueg	Sussex County DSS
Tom Drabic	Sussex County Planning Department

Introductions and Meeting Overview: Susan Zellman welcomed the group and then introduced Marlene Connor. The attendees then introduced themselves. Marlene explained that the purpose





and made a similar presentation to the March 26th meeting. Below is a summary of comments received.

Comment: Transoptions commented on the recommendation of creating a Regional Coordination Council and housing that position within NJCAM. As NJCAM is a state-wide organization, the suggestion was made that this position should be part of the NJTPA. It was also suggested that the budget for this position not just include the salary but also operating expenses.

Answer: The NJTPA is not a service provider rather they have the role of enabling the planning process.

Comment: NJCAM is not a service provider either.

Answer: NJCAM has members who are service providers, and they are considering creation of a regional group. COST is another option.

Comment: Funding is being reduced across the board. The Transportation Trust Fund is expected to run out in 2011 and the casino funds are shrinking. There needs to be another source of funding identified. A gas tax increase should be imposed, with a portion of the funds going to paratransit and social service programs. Also funds should go to transit station renovations to make them ADA compliant. Perhaps this direct link to improvements would make the increase more palatable.

Answer: There has been talk of increasing taxes on the casino funds to offset the loss of revenue.

Comment: The County representatives present said that the plan accurately reflected their issues.

Answer: In order to deliver a plan with potential to be effective, the municipalities have to come to the table. The challenge is to make a coordinated program out of dispersed funding sources. The focus needs to go beyond pursuit of federal funding.

Comment: The 6-County Coalition has not yet focused too much on social services, but it is a good starting place.

Answer: There are natural county clusters that can be taken advantage of when considering coordination, for instance those with little transit service.

Comment: The Plan does not mention public transportation and how to integrate that with community transit. Why is that?

Answer: NJ TRANSIT is redesigning their bus system which should help with this.

Comment: There needs to be more public transit – there needs to be more than 1 bus per hour. The cost of taxis is too high, and demand response services are too costly.

Answer: This is difficult in counties with low levels of transit services.

Comment: The Plan needs to emphasize coordinated end-to-end planning, and more flexible routes and feeder systems.

Comment: Are there cost savings in the Plan? Where are they and at what level?

Answer: The Plan focuses more on reallocation and better use of resources through improved efficiency. The Best Practices in other states are where they have figured out how to incorporate Medicaid services and have gone farther towards sustainability.



Comment: Contracting services out to profit-making organizations loses money. There would be savings if services could be provided through government funded entities.

Comment: There will be increasing amounts of seniors needing services in the future, so there needs to be planning for future demand.

Comment: There needs to be incentives for municipalities to buy into the notion of coordination. In Morris County there is some regionalization of Dial-A-Ride services, but only a couple of municipalities participate and other than that it has been met with resistance.

Comment: Would the mobility manager be for the whole region? Would it make sense to have the geographic area be smaller such as the 6-County Coalition?

Comment: Planning for the future is great but you need to look at the condition of existing services, which are falling apart. Access Link buses are in shambles. The drivers do not drop their passengers at safe locations, such as across McCarter Blvd. rather than in front of NJTPA headquarters. The program needs to be revamped.

Answer: NJ TRANSIT is paying a contractor to provide those services, and there is no excuse for that situation. NJ TRANSIT needs to be made aware of the complaints, and the drivers need better training.

Comment: The study should be commended for including focus groups.