

APPROVED

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

MINUTES – October 25, 2016

Attendance Officers

Chairman Paul Larrousse

Municipal Representatives

Mr. Sanford Gardner, East Brunswick Township

Mr. Gary Panichella, Highland Park Borough

Mr. Lupe Munoz, Perth Amboy City

Mr. Thomas Cornell, Woodbridge Township

Others

Ms. Jael Davis, 6th Congressional District

Mr. Paul Onish, 14th Legislative District

Mr. Daniel Lebar, Esq., 18th Legislative Districts

Mr. Donald Newton, 19th Legislative District

Mr. Dave Gregor, Presenter, Middlesex County Comprehensive Traffic Safety Program

Ms. Laila Caune, Middlesex County Office of Aging and Disabled Services

Mr. Joseph Peake, Middlesex County, Office of Information Technology

Mrs. Mildred Scott, Middlesex County Sheriff's Office

Mr. Kevin Dunn, New Jersey Turnpike Authority

Mr. Keith Hamas, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)

Mr. Will Yarrzab, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)

Mr. Mike Beltranena, Suburban Transit/COACH USA

Mr. Eudor, Resident, Edison Township

Staff

Mr. George M. Ververides, Director, Middlesex County Office of Planning

Mr. Anthony Gambilonghi, Supervisor, Transportation Division

Mr. Bruce McCracken, Principal Planner, Transportation Division

Total in Attendance – 21

I. Call to Order

- **Statement on Open Public Meetings Act**
- **Pledge Allegiance**

II. Minutes

September 27, 2016 Minutes were distributed for approval at the next meeting.

Motion to approve the May 24, 2016 Minutes was made and seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

III. Welcome/ Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Larrousse called the meeting to order in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Chairman welcomed all that were in attendance at the meeting and called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Sign in Reminder

Chairman Larrousse reminded the public to sign the attendance sheet.

Correspondence – None.

Freeholder Comments – Absent.

Introduction of TCC Members

All persons and members in attendance of the meeting introduced themselves and the organization(s) they represented.

IV. Special Item: Distracted Driving and Distracted Walking, Consequences and Prevention

Strategies. Presented by: Mr. David Gregor, Public Safety Coordinator, Middlesex County Comprehensive Traffic Safety Program (CTSP)

Mr. David Gregor introduced himself and explained the purpose of the Middlesex County Comprehensive Traffic Safety Program (CTSP). Freeholder H. James Polos created the (2009) program for the county to lead municipalities through education, enhancement, and enforcement efforts on all traffic safety operations.

The CTSP conducts a cohesive approach to reduce the total amount of motor vehicle crashes realized in Middlesex County as well as its severity. The program emphasizes an aggressive outreach, coordinated enforcement and proactive identification for traffic control enhancements such as billboard and lawn signs. A power point presentation and video was shown to outline the meeting topic of distracted driving, walking, and consequences and strategies to reduce accidents and fatalities.

Mr. Gregor shared statistics reported by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA):

- ❖ Ten percent of fatal crashes, 18 percent of injury crashes, and 16 percent of all police reported motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2014 were reported as distraction related crashes.

- ❖ There were 3,179 people killed and an estimated additional 431,000 injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.
- ❖ Ten percent of all drivers 15 to 19 years old involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crashes. This age group has the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted at the time of the crashes.
- ❖ Preliminary estimates from the National Council indicate a rising trend from 2014 to 2016 in traffic related fatalities. Motor vehicle deaths were 9% higher through the first six months of 2016 than in 2015, and 18% higher than two years ago at the six month mark.

According to the New Jersey Department of Highway Traffic Safety, in 2014, for the 5th year, distracted driving was the leading cause of fatal crashes in New Jersey. Mr. Gregor reported that 19,100 people have been killed on American roads since January of 2016 and 2.2 million were seriously injured requiring medical attention. 85% of crashes are caused by three main types of distracted driving behavior(s):

- ❖ Visual refers to removing your eyes from the road;
- ❖ Manual refers to actions that remove your hands from the wheel of the vehicle; and
- ❖ Cognitive refers to any instance in which your mind is not focused on driving.

Mr. Gregor stated while all distractions can endanger a driver's safety, texting is the most alarming because it involves all three types of distracted driving behavior. Other kinds of distractions include:

- ❖ Using a cell phone;
- ❖ Eating and drinking;
- ❖ Using a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) or Global Positioning System (GPS); and
- ❖ Changing the radio station, CD, or Mp3 player.

Mr. Gregor discussed what constitutes distracted walking. The National Safety Council on distracted walking reported:

- ❖ 54% of adult cell phone users have run into something or someone while distracted by their devices.
- ❖ 40% of teens have been injured or nearly injured by a car, motorcycle, or bike and the risk doubles when they are distracted by cellular devices.
- ❖ Distracted walking is to blame for a 35% increase in pedestrian accidents over the last six years.

Mr. Gregor explained the three E's of traffic safety [E]ducation, [E]nforcement and [E]nhancement and other preventive strategies were addressed in efforts to reduce accidents and fatalities. The preferred mode of prevention is education. Throughout the county various events are held to educate the public on safety, targeting drivers between ages 15 to 19. One known initiative is through the high school driver education program which particularly is relevant to this population.

The Eyes on the Road, Hands on the Wheel campaign was held on June 30, 2015 at the Raceway Gas Station in Edison Township. 10,000 palm-size business cards were distributed at 13 Raceway gas stations throughout the County. These business cards were also issued during traffic stops as warnings. The Middlesex County Distraction Awareness contest was developed as a public service announcement for walking and cycling safety. The contest was open to students enrolled at Rutgers University or Middlesex County College. Monetary prizes and scholarships were awarded.

A campaign entitled, 'The 3D Don't Drive Dangerously' on the Route 18 Corridor was held in Old Bridge and East Brunswick Townships where high school students were asked to produce a

30-second video on the dangers of texting and cell phone use while driving. Another campaign called the 'Hang Up and Drive' initiative was held in Woodbridge Township. Mr. Gregor stated that education informs people through driver's education classes, media safety campaigns, signage, speed watch programs, and meetings between community and residents. Distracted driving and walking behaviors are 100% preventable.

Mr. Gregor detailed various enforcement strategies currently being implemented. Warnings or summons and surveys are conducted for speeding, texting while driving, distracted driving, seat belt usage and impaired driving (DUI). Officers use police motorcycles and both unmarked and marked police cars. Other techniques used include sign enhancements such as radar trailers, speed display signs and radar reader boards. The County in collaboration with municipalities and vigilant communities helps to ensure safer roadways for everyone. Collaborative efforts are essential. Mr. Gregor stated that pavement marking, warning and regulatory signs and traffic calming devices along with other traffic engineering measures goes into the design of roadways.

Proposed legislation was introduced in March 2016 that would prohibit walking while texting and bar pedestrians on public roads from using electronic communication devices that are not hands free. Violators would face fines of up to \$50, 15 days imprisonment or both, which is the same penalty as jaywalking under Title 39 of the New Jersey Revised Statutes for Motor Vehicle and Traffic Regulation.

Mr. Gregor stated additional information and downloadable materials can be found on the Middlesex County Comprehensive Traffic Safety Program website: <http://mctrafficsafety.com/>

Staff Reports

A. New Jersey Department of Transportation – Uzoma Anuke

Absent.

B. New Jersey Transit –Thomas Clark

Absent.

C. North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) –Keith Hamas

Mr. Hamas noted the continuous efforts of NJTPA's Street Smart Pedestrian Safety Education Campaign and its expansion to improve pedestrian infrastructure on local, county, and state roadways by focusing on community-based efforts to change pedestrian and motorist behavior.

D. New Jersey Turnpike Authority – Kevin Dunn

Mr. Dunn reported on the following projects:

- Garden State Parkway Interchange 125 improvement(s) in Sayreville: Work has begun on the 18-month project.
- Turnpike Interchange 9 Improvements at Route 18 is now complete.
- I-287/ Turnpike Interchange 10 improvement(s): Work is behind schedule.

E. Rutgers – The State University – Zachary Subar *on behalf of Jennifer Stuart*

Absent.

F. Keep Middlesex Moving (KMM) –William Neary, Morteza Ansari

Absent.

- G. Middlesex County Area Transit Services** – Laila Caune, Phil Sherdan
Ms. Caune stated MCAT is launching new software for service and scheduling operations.
- H. Middlesex County Engineering Office** – Richard Wallner
Absent.
- I. Middlesex County Improvement Authority** – Denise Nickel
No Report.
- J. East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA)** – Mike and Ann Kruimer
Absent.
- K. Middlesex County Office of Emergency Management** – John Ferguson
Absent.
- L. Academy Bus Co** – Chuck Kassinger
Absent.
- M. Suburban Transit / Coach USA** – Michael Beltranena
Mr. Beltranena said that New Jersey Department of Transportation installed the bridge culvert located in the vicinity of Little Rocky Hill, south of School House Lane for traffic traveling north and south bound on Route 27 toward Kingston.
- N. Business Development and Education** – Kathaleen Shaw, Carla Cefalo
Absent.
- O. Transportation News Update** – Bruce McCracken
Newspaper articles were provided as part of the meeting packet.
- P. Staff Activities** – George Ververides
Mr. Ververides talked about the State Transportation Trust Fund renewal dedication, and stated that a special Capital Improvement Committee has been formed consisting of citizen representatives to be appointed by the Governor from central, southern and northern regions to review projects before they are implemented. Also, the Committee will include the Chairman of the three Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) in the State including North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), and the Southern Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO). The question was raised how NJTPA’s Transportation Improvement Program projects will be impacted by the decision of the committee and what will be the relationship.
- V.**
Public Comments – None.
- VI. Adjournment** – Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved and seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Danielle A. Britton

Danielle A. Britton, Secretary
Middlesex County Transportation Coordinating Committee