

APPROVED

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

MINUTES – September 27, 2016

Attendance Officers

Chairman Paul Larrousse
Vice-Chairman Thomas Vigna

Municipal Representatives

Mr. Dennis McFadden, Carteret Borough
Mr. Peter Bilton, Highland Park Borough
Ms. Susan Welkovits, Council, Highland Park Borough
Mr. Tom Valenti, New Brunswick City
Mr. Tom Vigna, North Brunswick Township
Mr. Les Varga, Plainsboro Township
Mr. Thomas Cornell, Woodbridge Township

Others

Ms. Jael Davis, 6th Congressional District
Mr. Paul Onish, 14th Legislative District
Mr. Daniel A. Lebar, Esq, 18th Legislative Districts
Mr. Donald Newton, 19th Legislative District
Mr. R. Bruce Donald, East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA)
Mr. Mike and Anne Kruimer, East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA)
Mr. Tim Marshall, ETM Associates/Highland Park
Mr. Dave Sittler, ETM Associates/Highland Park
Mr. Fern Goodhart, Safe Walking and Cycling Center/ Highland Park
Mr. Morteza Ansari, Keep Middlesex Moving
Ms. Denise Nickel, Middlesex County Improvement Authority
Mr. Walter Stochel, East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA)
Mr. Martin Hofler, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)
Mr. Mike Beltranena, Suburban Transit/COACH USA

Staff

Mr. George M. Ververides, Director, Middlesex County Office of Planning
Mr. Anthony Gambilonghi, Supervisor, Transportation Division
Mrs. Mirah Becker, Supervisor, Comprehensive Planning and the Environment Division
Mr. Nick Tufaro, Principal Planner, Comprehensive Planning and the Environment Division

Total in Attendance – 27

I. Call to Order

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

II. Minutes

May 24, 2016 Minutes were distributed for approval at the next meeting.

Motion to approve the April 26, 2016 Minutes was made by Mr. Thomas Cornell, and seconded by Mr. Mike Kruimer. 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 – Mr. Gambilonghi announced two Public Information Sessions being held to discuss the Raritan River, North Jersey Coast Line Railroad Drawbridge Replacement project. First meeting was held on Tuesday, September 20, 2016 in Perth Amboy at 4:00PM. The second meeting is being held tonight in South Amboy at 7:00PM.

Mr. Gambilonghi explained that the bridge has been vulnerable to major storm events like Superstorm Sandy 2012, which have led to the need to replace the existing bridge and improve the reliability of railroad operations on the North Jersey Coast Line. Funding has been provided through the Federal Resiliency Program. Handouts were made available about the project.

Mr. Gambilonghi also mentioned that New Jersey Transit Bus #817 schedule has been modified. It will now serve Brookdale Higher Education Center and Hazlet.

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: East Coast Greenway (ECGA) in NJ: Moving the project forward

Presented by: Mr. Bruce Donald, Tri-State Greenway Coordinator, ECGA

Mr. Donald announced that the East Coast Greenway Alliance is in its 25th year operating as a not – for – profit agency. The tri-state advocacy group works in 15 states; its corridor runs through 450 communities throughout the eastern seaboard and encompasses 3,000 miles from Florida to Maine. He stated there are 34.6 million residents who live within 5 miles of the route. In New Jersey, over 50 percent of the route is off road which can provide community opportunities and incentives. New Jersey has 93 miles between Pennsylvania and New York connecting through Trenton, Princeton, New Brunswick, Newark, and Jersey City in addition to other rural and suburban communities. The D&R Canal State Park runs 35 miles from Trenton to New Brunswick. The Delaware River Heritage Trail is an alternate route from Trenton to Camden. The Middlesex County Greenway has a continuous off-road route of over 30%. The

overall population size in Middlesex County is 811,130. New Brunswick City alone has a population size of 54,749.

Mr. Donald explained how the greenway was an integral part of transportation policy filled with vibrant opportunities. Studies have confirmed that every dollar spent on multi-use linear trails creates an investment return. Trail usage and tourism are major drivers that promote economic development. Mr. Donald expressed other reasons to support the East Coast Middlesex County Greenway such as recreational creativities, health options, and a variety of other community amenities.

There was discussion on the Raritan River and its connector. PowerPoint slides were shown of various maps of current on-road and proposed off-road parcels. Mr. Donald noted that the Raritan River has a significant gap in New Jersey's section of the East Coast Greenway. The current on-road route between New Brunswick and Metuchen utilizes Route 514, Woodbridge Road, and King George's Post Road. Major connections to/from the greenway corridor include locations at Raritan Center in Edison Township, Rutgers University in New Brunswick, Middlesex County College, Highland Park, and Metuchen. These areas connect to colleges and universities, commercial centers, and transportation hubs. In addition there are connections to the D&R Canal Tow Path and Trail; 38 miles to Trenton, 69 miles to Frenchtown, and 82 miles of continuous off-road trails connecting Metuchen, and Trenton to the Delaware River Valley.

Mr. Donald stated that the Raritan River connector could be two projects totaling 11.5 miles with 0.5 miles completed at Donaldson Park. The East Coast Greenway continuous mileage from Trenton to Metuchen would become a 51 mile spine trail.

Productivity goals were identified such as taking inventory on existing data; feasibility for alignment, public support, and funding for planning and preliminary engineering. Funding is vital for the creation of these projects. Mr. Donald also mentioned there are still federal dollars available for these types of projects.

Mr. Donald stated that the goal would be to develop ready-to-go engineering plans for a minimum of two of the following parks:

- Johnson Park to Donaldson Park – with grade constraints; on/off road work around; and separated bike lanes such as a cycle track.
- Donaldson Park to Raritan Center – a longer, route with major connectors. Community support would make the project a win/win.

During the presentation, Mr. Donald responded to questions from the audience:

Mr. Lebar, Esq., 18th Legislative District inquired about the width size for the pathway and if a lighting plan is being proposed along the greenway. Mr. Donald stated the federal minimum guidelines for uniform width size is 10 feet. Mr. Donald replied that parts of the national trail will be illuminated, particularly in urban centers. The locations would depend on population size, and usage of the corridor.

Ms. Welkovits, Highland Park Borough Councilwoman, noted that Highland Park is interested in pursuing funding options for the East Coast Greenway trail to have a connecting point into Highland Park. The Borough would like to meet and discuss funding, construction concepts, and overall design.

Mr. Ververides, Middlesex County Planning Director, stated the County has studied the greenway for some time and supports any effort to obtain grant funding. The County also wants to preserve

open space for the connection of Donaldson Park and Johnson Park with a trail. Mr. Ververides mentioned that obtaining grant funds may be very competitive.

Mr. Tufaro, Middlesex County Principal Planner, mentioned that the County Parks Office is considering applying for the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Alternatives Program (TAP) fund to extend the eastern portion of the Middlesex Greenway. The application deadline is November 10, 2016. One of the projects that the greenway is eligible for is its design and construction of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized forms of transportation. The likelihood of an awarded grant for construction costs is uncertain.

Ms. Nickel, Middlesex County Improvement Authority, brought up the NJDOT Earmark Program and questioned the status of \$800,000 of funding earmarked for the Middlesex County section of the East Coast Greenway. Mr. Gambilonghi replied that the NJDOT took the funds and applied it to other projects.

Mr. Hofler, NJTPA, clarified that according to federal legislation, at the time, that if an earmarked project was more than 10 years old and 10% of those expenditures were not utilized, than funding would be repurposed to another project.

Mr. Stochel, ECGA, noted that the New Jersey Convention and Convention Center located in Edison is in support of the Middlesex Greenway.

Mr. Ververides concluded the presentation with an announcement that the Middlesex Greenway has been designated as a 'Great Public Place' by the American Planning Association, New Jersey Chapter. A ceremony is being held at the Greenway Trailhead on Saturday, October 15, 2016 from 11am-1pm.

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) – Martin Hofler on *behalf of Keith Hamas.*

No Report.

D. New Jersey Turnpike Authority – Kevin Dunn

Absent.

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

Absent.

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

Mr. Ansari passed out this month's newsletter. Highlighted for discussion was the New Jersey Electric Vehicle Conference. The event will take place on Monday, October 31, 2016 from

8:00am to 12:00 noon at 254 Easton Avenue, New Brunswick. It's being hosted both by KMM and St. Peters University Hospital.

G. Middlesex County Area Transit Services – Laila Caune, Phil Sherdan
Absent.

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
Mr. Kruimer announced upcoming cycling and other riding events.
October 2nd New Brunswick Cyclovia
October 9th 8th Annual Hudson Loop Ride. For more information www.greenway.org
October 15th Middlesex Greenway Event in Metuchen
November 11th – 13th ECGA Annual Fall Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island

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 reported that there will be a new Park and Ride facility located off of Route 206 in Hillsborough (Somerset County), to open on Tuesday, October 11, 2016. The next location being proposed for a Park and Ride facility is in North Brunswick.

Mr. Beltranena advised of road closure from 9:00pm Friday October 7, 2016 to 6:00am, Monday October 10, 2016 along Route 27 northbound/southbound. Effected areas include South Brunswick/ Kendall Park.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation will install a temporary bridge ahead of a scheduled drainage project to begin next year (2017). Traffic traveling on Route 27 northbound will be detoured onto Route 1 through Promenade Boulevard. Traffic traveling on Route 27 southbound will be detoured onto Route 1 through Finnegens Lane.

N. Business Development and Education – Kathaleen Shaw, Carla Cefalo
Absent.

O. CR 529 Corridor Study Update –Tony Gambilonghi
Mr. Gambilonghi reported on the final draft of the CR529 Corridor Study Report that has been submitted to the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority for review, and that staff is awaiting the final comments. Mr. Gambilonghi will provide updates when received.

P. Transportation News Update –Staff on behalf of Bruce McCracken
Newspaper articles were provided as part of the meeting packet.

Q. Staff Activities – George Ververides

Mr. Ververides welcomed everyone back from a three-month long summer break of meetings. The status of the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) was discussed. Many statewide transportation projects were put on hold during the summer months for road and transit projects across the state. Many projects also have been shut down until the TTF is replenished. There are towns in the process of suing NJDOT for stopping state funded projects.

Mr. Ververides stated that the Planning Office is in its beginning stage of updating the County Comprehensive Master Plan.

V.

Public Comments – None.

VI. Adjournment – Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved and seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Danielle A. Britton, Secretary
Middlesex County Transportation Coordinating Committee