

APPROVED

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

January 24, 2017

Attendance Officers

Chairman Paul Larrousse, National Transit Institute
Vice-Chair Tom Vigna, North Brunswick Township

Municipal Representatives

Mr. Mark Kataryniak, Edison Township
Mr. Peter Bilton, Highland Park Borough
Ms. Laura Czarneski, Jamesburg Borough
Mr. Carlo Soico, North Brunswick Township
Mr. Lupe Munoz, Perth Amboy City
Mr. Thomas Cornell, Woodbridge Township

Others

Mr. Brian Tobin, 14th Legislative District
Mr. Paul Onish, 14th Legislative District
Mr. Daniel Lebar, Esq., 18th Legislative Districts
Mr. Donald Newton, 19th Legislative District
Mr. Mike Kruimer, East Coast Greenway Alliance
Ms. Anne Kruimer, East Coast Greenway Alliance
Mr. Morteza Ansari, Keep Middlesex Moving
Mr. Tom Clark, New Jersey Transit
Mr. Kevin Dunn, New Jersey Turnpike Authority
Mr. Douglas Groff, Resident, Edison Township
Mr. James Karamanos, Resident, Highland Park Borough
Mr. Mike Beltranena, Suburban Transit/COACH USA

Staff

Mr. George M. Ververides, Director, Middlesex County Office of Planning
Mr. Anthony Gambilonghi, Supervisor, Transportation Division
Ms. Danielle Britton, Planning Staff

Total in Attendance – 23

I. Call to Order

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

II. Minutes

Minutes of October 25, 2016 were distributed. Review for approval of both September 27, 2016 and October 25, 2016 minutes will happen at the next meeting in February.

III. Welcome/ Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Larrousse called the meeting to order in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. The 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 that Rutgers University is partnering with NJTPA and NJDOT to initiate a 350 regional smart bicycle share system that would be open to the public and serve the community. The first stakeholders meeting is being held in the Freeholder Meeting Room in the County Administration Building on January 25, 2017 at 9:30am. The meeting will include a presentation on program goals and discuss details and roles of the various entities involved to obtain stakeholder input.

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: North Jersey Coast Railroad Line Bridge Replacement Project over Raritan River. Presented by: RJ Palladino, Senior Program Manager at New Jersey Transit

RJ Palladino introduced himself and explained that the replacement of the Raritan River Drawbridge project is being advanced through an environmental review in accordance with the Federal Transit Administration. In November 2014, New Jersey Transit was selected through a competitive process to receive \$ 446.3 million in Federal Transit Administration Emergency Relief Program funding to support the design and construction of the Replacement of the Raritan River Drawbridge Project.

The project is for the complete replacement of the Raritan River Drawbridge and demolition of the existing 108-year-old structure. NJ Transit has been holding other public outreach sessions to inform the general public and stakeholders on the nature of the project, its possible impacts and effects.

Mr. Palladino stated the Raritan River Drawbridge is being updated due to significant damage during Super Storm Sandy in 2012. The bridge now operates at reduced train speeds and is still vulnerable to future storms. The bridge is critical along the North Jersey Coast Line, which is

New Jersey Transit's third most heavily used rail line. It runs through the municipalities of Perth Amboy, South Amboy and Woodbridge in Middlesex County.

Project goals highlighted were improvements to the rail line to minimize service disruption and enhance operations; provide design speeds for trains on the bridge upward of 60 mph and the accommodation of freight trains of 286,000 pounds with potential upward of 315,000 pounds. Other objectives discussed were reducing adverse impacts on the built and natural environment; preserving access to nearby residences and businesses during construction and avoidance of impacts on natural features and historic resources.

Several movable bridge designs were observed. They included:

- The Swing Bridge which is a movable structure that has a primary vertical locating pin and support ring. This type requires no counter weights. This design is similar to the existing bridge.
- The Bascule Bridge (Drawbridge) is movable with a counterweight that continuously balances a span or "leaf" throughout its upward swing to provide clearances for boat traffic.
- The Vertical Lift Bridge is a type that is movable in which a span raises vertically. The counterweights in a vertical lift are only required to be equal to the weight of the deck. The new bridge will be a Vertical Lift with more durable materials at higher elevation of 110 ft. similar to the Victory Bridge.

In addition to raising the bridge deck and tracks and control systems, the bridge will structurally be designed to withstand storm surge during extreme weather events. The center Pier from the existing bridge will be eliminated to widen the channel. The new bridge will be built next to the existing and then removed once the new bridge is completed.

Environmental Assessment:

Mr. Palladino stated that the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106 (4f) of the Environment Assessment are being prepared for the project. Included in this section is Historic Preservation and it is also being reviewed. The environmental assessment describes the project and its anticipated impact on a range of environmental issues including impact to water quality and natural resources, adverse effects on historical and cultural resources and quality of life in the project area. Mr. Palladino mentioned the cooperation and support of agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers and the United States Coast Guards.

Upon completion of the draft Environmental Assessment, Mr. Palladino anticipated a Federal Register and publication notice by Spring, 2017.

A 30-day public comment period including open public meetings will occur and comments are reviewed and information will be finalized with FTA. The agency will issue a final Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) which is created to declare that compliance has been met. This allows for the project to proceed to next phase. The goal is to complete 30% of the design phase to proceed next with final design and construction.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Mr. Palladino noted that additional information on this project and other projects can be found on the NJ Transit's website: www.njtransit.com.

Questions/Answers:

Mr. Paul Onish, 14th Legislative District, asked when the project would be ready for construction. Mr. Palladino stated the design, permitting and construction phase estimated time is 4-years.

Mr. Douglas Groff, resident, asked the length of time for any road closures to construct the new bridge. Mr. Palladio replied other than a few weekend outages; there should not be traffic concerns utilizing the existing bridge while the new is being constructed.

Mr. Dan Lebar Esq., 18th Legislative Districts, discussed concerns of the existing bridge such as its 'older' equipment compared to newer technology; the availability of service parts and obsolete materials compared to the construction of a new bridge utilizing the same Swing Bridge design features. Mr. Lebar questioned what anticipated long-term technology will be used and will there be service technicians to repair and maintain the new bridge. Mr. Palladino noted the current swing bridge design standards are in compliance with railroad operations and federal regulations.

Mr. Anthony Gambilonghi asked about time saving of the swing bridge. Mr. Palladino stated the lift would be quicker than the existing providing for less delays on trains.

Vice Chairman Vigna questioned if there is a standard to have a backup generator at the bridge in the event of a power outage. Mr. Palladino stated there will be no onsite backup generator.

Mr. George Ververides suggested that the existing pier bank of the bridge should allow for fishing and other coastal activities.

Staff Reports

A. New Jersey Department of Transportation – Uzoma Anuke

Absent.

B. New Jersey Transit –Thomas Clark

Mr. Clark announced the accessibility project at Perth Amboy City Train Station is fully funded. The \$50 million overall project was approved at \$2,051,128 for the completion of final design and engineering services, which has reached 30% completion. Of this, \$9.6 million of funding was allocated for the Perth Amboy Train Station conceptual design and future construction. The station's design is expected to be completed by the end of year 2018 and construction to begin early 2019.

Mr. Lebar inquired on NJ Transit local bus No. 813 and procedures for reporting equipment maintenance. It was observed that bus headlights were not operating on a route. Mr. Clark stated that bus drivers are to immediately report maintenance issues when identified. Mr. Clark noted he would look into the matter.

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

Absent.

D. New Jersey Turnpike Authority – Kevin Dunn

Mr. Dunn reported on the following projects:

- Interchange 125 has moved into stage 2 of the project.
- Resurfacing at Turnpike Exit 8A, 9, and 10 are complete.
- I-287/ Turnpike Interchange 10 improvement(s) are complete.

Mr. Gambilonghi asked about toll violations at the Garden State Parkway Interchange 125 for drivers who did not have an EZ-Pass account. Mr. Dunn was not aware of the issue and would report it back to the Turnpike Authority.

E. Rutgers – The State University – Jennifer Stuart

Absent.

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

No Report.

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

Absent.

H. Middlesex County Engineering Office – Richard Wallner

Absent.

I. Middlesex County Improvement Authority – Brian Wahler

Absent.

J. East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA) – Mike and Ann Kruimer

Mr. Kruimer announced upcoming cycling related events. They include:

2/18/2017	NJ Bike/ Walk Summit – Princeton, NJ.
3/ 6 -8/ 2017	National Bike Summit – Washington, DC.
4/30/2017	Franklin Food Bank Tour.
5/6/2017	CJBC Farmlands Tour.
5/21/2017	21 st Annual Bicycle tour of Edison and Metuchen.

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 Coach USA has received 24 new 2017 commuter buses. Within 18 months, remaining buses will be replaced. A new bus route will begin within the next month from the park and ride location at Exit 8A Twin Rivers to Jersey City.

Coach USA was involved with the 2017 Presidential Inauguration event held in Washington, DC by way of transporting members of the homeland security to their locations. It also transported 5,500 people from eastern Pennsylvania to the Women’s March in Washington, DC.

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

Absent.

O. Transportation News Update – Bruce McCracken. Absent.

Newspaper articles were provided as part of the meeting packet.

P. Staff Activities – George Ververides

Mr. Ververides discussed infrastructure topics that will affect our region. Items highlighted included how much money would be generated from the new State gas tax; how would it be

allocated; and how President Trump will spend money on Infrastructure Improvements and regional earmark projects. Specific major projects to impact the region include the Hudson Tunnel, Portal Bridge, and the North Jersey Coastline transit improvements.

V. **Public Comments** – Mr. Lebar stated he is a stakeholder in Salem County. He asked for guidance on how an organization would advocate for partnership with Delaware on advancing regional transportation improvements between Southern New Jersey and Delaware. Chairman Larrousse stated that federal requirements for urbanized areas require an ongoing coordination and review of federal funded projects through the respective Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which for Salem County the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPPO) is the federally recognized MPO for the southern New Jersey Region including Atlantic, Cumberland, Cape May and Salem Counties.

VI. **Adjournment** – Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 pm was moved by Mr. Mike Beltranena, seconded by Mr. Mike Kruimer. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Danielle A. Britton, Secretary
Middlesex County Transportation Coordinating Committee