

APPROVED  
APPROVED  
**MIDDLESEX COUNTY**  
**TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**June 27, 2017**

**Attendance Officers**

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

**Municipal Representatives**

Ms. Annie Hindenlang, City of Perth Amboy/ Topology Consulting  
Mr. Mike Martone, City of Perth Amboy/ Topology Consulting  
Mr. Sanford Gardner, East Brunswick Township  
Mr. Bruce Banner, East Brunswick Township  
Mr. Fern Goodhart, Highland Park Borough  
Mr. Brian Tobin, Metuchen Borough/ 14<sup>th</sup> Legislative District  
Mr. Richard Pucciarelli, Old Bridge Township  
Mr. Lupe Munoz, Perth Amboy City

**Others**

Mr. Paul Onish, 14<sup>th</sup> Legislative District  
Mr. Daniel Lebar, Esq., 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Districts  
Mr. Donald Newton, 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative District  
Mr. Craig Schulz, Amtrak – Gateway Project overview (Presenter)  
Mr. Mike Kruimer, East Coast Greenway Alliance  
Ms. Anne Kruimer, East Coast Greenway Alliance  
Mr. David Schmetterer, Monmouth County, Planning/Transportation Division  
Mr. RJ Palladino, New Jersey Transit – Hudson Tunnel Project overview (Presenter)  
Mr. Nellia Shakhmina, New Jersey Turnpike Authority  
Mr. Peter Bilton, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority  
Ms. Zenobia Fields, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority  
Mr. James Karamanos, Resident, Highland Park  
Mr. Doug Groff, Resident, Middlesex County  
Mr. Brendan Torres, Rutgers University  
Ms. Leigh Ann Kimber, Rutgers University, Division of Institutional Planning and Operations  
Mr. Zach McCue, Senator Cory Booker  
Mr. Walter Lane, Somerset County, Planning/Transportation Division  
Mr. Vince Grover, Suburban Transit/COACH USA

**Staff**

Mr. Khalid Anjum, Department Head, Infrastructure Management  
Mr. George M. Ververides, Director, Middlesex County Office of Planning  
Mr. Anthony Gambilonghi, Supervisor, Transportation Division  
Mr. Bruce McCracken, Principal Planner, Transportation Division  
Mr. Stan Olszewski, Supervisor, Development Review Division  
Ms. Denise Nickel, Economic and Business Development Department  
Mr. Joe Peake, Information Technology Department

**Total in Attendance – 35**

## **I. Call to Order**

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

## **II. Minutes**

February 28, 2017 Minutes were distributed for approval at the next meeting.

Motion to approve April 25, 2017 and May 23, 2017 Minutes were made by Paul Onish, and seconded by Dan Lebar. Motion carried.

## **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 attended 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 stated the New Jersey Department of Transportation will hold a public information meeting on Thursday, June 29, 2017 from 4pm – 7pm at the Edison Township Municipal Building located at 100 Municipal Boulevard in Edison. The public will have an opportunity to review concept plans and ask questions regarding the Route 1 Northbound Bridge project over the Raritan River to rehabilitate the bridge which connects New Brunswick and Edison. It was also reported that NJDOT has announced the startup of the Route 1 Running Shoulder project in South Brunswick during the 6:00 to 9:00 AM and 4:00 to 6:00 PM peak hour periods.

**Freeholder Comments** – Not Present.

### **Introduction of TCC Members**

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

## **IV. Special Item: Gateway Program and Hudson Tunnel Project** Presented by: Craig Schultz, Amtrak Gateway Communications, Infrastructure and Investment Development and RJ Palladino, New Jersey Transit Capital Planning.

Mr. Schultz described the Gateway Program as the most urgent infrastructure project in America. Penn Station, New York operates at capacity of 1,300 daily train movements throughout the station on 21 tracks; Penn Station in Newark moves 450 trains, commuting 200,000 passengers daily on a two-track bottleneck into New York City. The Northeast Corridor (NEC) which is owned by Amtrak and includes NJ Transit as well as Amtrak operations is one of the busiest rail passenger sections in the region and the country. Aging infrastructure such as the North River Tunnel and the Portal Bridge dates to the 1900's now requiring major necessary investments. The connectivity between New York and New Jersey is estimated to affect the production of 10 per cent of America's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The Gateway Program consist of a series of projects to double capacity to four-tracks from Newark eastbound to New York Penn Station westbound. Key projects under Phase I include the replacement of the Portal Bridge and rehabilitation to the Hudson Tunnel. The goal is to preserve its existing service and to build resilient infrastructure that would support minimal disruption of service from severe weather related events.

The existing swing bridge over the Hackensack River will be replaced with a high level, fixed span bridge to allow for increased speed and provide greater capacity for more boats to cross underneath the bridge. Mr. Schultz stated there is a funding commitment from local partnerships and that the portal bridge project is shovel ready. Mr. Schultz expressed optimism on the availability of remaining funds needed for this project.

Phase II of the project will expand New York Penn Station by eliminating the two-track bottleneck at the busiest points on the corridor and doubling the trans Hudson capacity to 48 trains per hour during peak periods. The goal is to improve system redundancy for more stable operations. Mr. Schultz noted that construction of a new two-track Hudson River Tunnel will allow rehabilitation of the North River Tunnel without interrupting existing NJ Transit and Amtrak services.

A 24-month environmental review is progressing and the draft environmental impact statement for the Hudson Tunnel work is to be released within the next month. The final design and environmental review has been completed on the Portal Bridge.

Chairman Larrousse thanked Mr. Schultz for an informative presentation, and then introduced Mr. RJ Palladino of NJ Transit who discussed the Hudson Tunnel project and its importance as shown on the attached Power point presentation.

Mr. Palladino stated that the roles and responsibilities of the Hudson Tunnel project partners in the NEPA process of this project were the Federal Railroad Administration with NJ Transit who are receiving the federal funding. Amtrak is designing and engineering the Tunnel. The Port Authority is coordinating the development while the Gateway Program Development Corporation is responsible for advancing the overall Gateway Program.

The need for the project is related to the insufficient capacity that exists and has increased also as a result of damage caused by Superstorm Sandy. The purpose of the project is to preserve The Amtrak Northeast Corridor service and NJTRASIT Commuter rail service between New Jersey and Penn Station New York.

The project goals are to improve service, maintain existing service, strengthen resiliency, enhance operational flexibility and capacity expansion while minimizing impacts on the natural and built environment.

The Preferred Alternative has been selected. It includes two new tracks from the Northeast Corridor in Secaucus, NJ, beneath the Palisades, Hoboken, and the Hudson River to connect to the existing approach tracks that lead into Penn Station New York; three new ventilation shafts/fan plants directly above the new tunnel; and Rehabilitation of the existing tunnel.

Federal Funding prerequisite under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires an Environmental Impact Statement for the project. This process is scheduled to be complete in March 2018.

The project schedule is design completion in 2019, construction completion in 2026, and rehabilitation of the existing Tunnel 2029.

Chairman Larrousse thanked Mr. Palladino also for an informative presentation, and opened the session for questions.

Questions were as follows:

1. What is the distinction between the Hudson Tunnel project and Gateway?

Answer: The Hudson Tunnel Project will allow rehabilitation of the existing Northeast Corridor tunnel beneath the Hudson River, known as the North River Tunnel, while maintaining uninterrupted commuter rail service between New Jersey and New York and intercity Northeast Corridor rail service. The Project addresses a specific need related to deterioration of the North River Tunnel. When completed, the Project will address a critical infrastructure need, will also strengthen the resilience of the Northeast Corridor to provide reliable service by providing redundant capability at the critical Hudson River crossing, and will help to facilitate a future expansion of rail capacity between New York and New Jersey. However, while the Hudson Tunnel Project addresses maintenance and resilience of the Northeast Corridor Hudson River crossing, it will not directly increase rail capacity. Ultimately, an increase in peak period service between Newark Penn Station and Penn Station New York cannot be realized until other substantial infrastructure capacity improvements are built in addition to a new Hudson River rail tunnel.

By contrast, the Gateway Program is a long-term plan to improve rail service along the Northeast Corridor in the area between Newark, New Jersey, and Penn Station New York and meet the demand for increasing ridership. When implemented in combination with the Hudson Tunnel Project, the full Gateway Program will create new track, tunnel, bridge, and station capacity that will allow the doubling in the number of passenger trains crossing under the Hudson River. These additional Gateway Program elements include the expansion of Penn Station New York, the nation's busiest train station; the replacement of the Northeast Corridor's Portal Bridge over the Hackensack River with twin two-track, high-level fixed rail bridges; reconfiguration of the Secaucus Junction Station in Secaucus and construction of the "Bergen Loop" tracks; as well as updates to, and modernization of, existing infrastructure, such as the electrical system that supplies power to the 450 daily trains using this segment of the Northeast Corridor. The Hudson Tunnel Project will be designed so as not to preclude other future projects to expand capacity in the area and may ultimately be an element of a larger program to expand rail capacity.

2. Mr. Ververides asked if the Environmental Impact Statement includes the connection to the Concrete Casings project and are the Dock Bridge Project East of Penn Station Newark and the Portal Bridge all part of the Impact Statement investigation.?

Answer is they are each treated separately and do not affect the findings on the Hudson Tunnel. And new alignment doesn't impact existing service.

3. Mr. Ververides also asked if any of the design work from the ARC project could be used towards the new Gateway project.

Answer: Some sections of the design from the ARC project are similar and could be utilized towards the Gateway improvements. The Preferred Alternative identified for the Hudson Tunnel Project will use properties already acquired by NJ TRANSIT for the ARC project. Also, The Access to the Region's Core (ARC) project, which was evaluated in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process completed in 2009, was designed to expand the capacity of the trans-Hudson rail system by constructing a new tunnel under the Hudson River together with additional station capacity for use only by NJ TRANSIT passenger trains under West 34th Street in Midtown Manhattan. The Hudson Tunnel Project does not include the construction of any new station capacity at or near Penn Station New York. Also, because of the need to maintain existing rail service while the North River Tunnel is being rehabilitated, the Hudson Tunnel Project must connect to the existing Penn Station tracks and platforms, whereas the ARC project served a separate, dedicated rail terminal with no rail connection to Penn Station. The ARC project was cancelled in 2010.

4. Paul Onish asked if the future capacity of the tunnel could be designed to include 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> tubes.

Answer is yes. The existing project does not preclude. The old tunnel with tubes 1 and 2 will be rebuilt, the new tunnel with tubes 3 and 4 will be in place as the North River tunnel is rebuilt and there will be the possibility to expand to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> tubes in another tunnel as the need arises.

5. Question re: on time delays commuting from New Brunswick during construction?

Answer: Commuting to Newark should not be a problem; However, delays are expected between Newark and New York. These delays should diminish as the progress on the new Hudson Tunnel reaches 4 tubes in operation.

6. Mr. Doug Groff asked about the impact of rail over other forms of commuting to New York.

Answer: A Tunnel Investment of \$20 billion is expected to generate benefits of \$ 80 Billion. Also, there will traffic and environmental benefits from the reduction of vehicle volumes.

7. And what about Funding? And what can the individual do as a private citizen to make a difference?

Answer: In addition to public funding sources that require NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) reviews and approvals, private partnerships will also be sought. To help move this project individuals should continue to be an activist, speak out, offer input, make their voices known, and come to public hearings so that the public record can reflect the public commitment to having the gateway projects be a priority.

8. Mr. Gambilonghi asked about any developments or news of the proposed North Brunswick Train and the Mid Line Lupe as future projects in the Northeast Corridor with the Station and the mid line loop.

Answer: None yet, just that these projects are in the long-term category for action at this point.

9. Mr. Ververides asked whether the existing tunnel is able to last another 10 to 12 years until the new improvements are made in 2030 in light of the extensive deterioration of the tunnels from Sandy damage which can a real threat to the Economy.

Answer: Ongoing maintenance work will be done to keep the existing tunnel in operation until the improvement project is completed, which is why a permanent improvements are needed to be done and completed as quickly as possible and why this project is considered to be the most important project in the nation.

### Staff Reports

- A. New Jersey Department of Transportation – Raymond Tomczak**  
Not Present.
- B. New Jersey Transit –RJ Palladino** No other report or comments
- C. North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) –Peter Bilton**  
The NJTPA Street Smart Program in Middlesex County is now being done with Middlesex Borough and has involved KMM Inc. as the local lead agency with Middlesex Borough Police enforcing Pedestrian Safety.
- D. New Jersey Turnpike Authority – Nellia Shakhmina**  
The Garden State Parkway Exit 125 project opening date is scheduled July 7, 2017.
- E. Rutgers – The State University – Jennifer Stuart, Leigh Ann Kimber**  
Ms. Kimber reported the project is moving administratively in preparation for implementation. Also, the Rutgers Transportation Master plan is being implemented on College Avenue.
- F. Keep Middlesex Moving (KMM) –William Neary, Morteza Ansari**  
Not present
- G. Middlesex County Area Transit Services – Laila Caune, Phil Sheridan**  
Not Present
- H. Middlesex County Engineering Office – Richard Wallner**  
Not Present.
- I. East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA) – Mike and Ann Kruimer**  
Mr. Krumier, No report
- J. Middlesex County Office of Emergency Management – John Ferguson**  
Not Present.

**K. Academy Bus Co – Chuck Kassinger**  
Not Present.

**L. Suburban Transit / Coach USA – Michael Beltranena**  
Mr. Beltranena reported on the proposal for a rail crossing exemption at the Millstone Branch freight rail line crossing on Route 27 in New Brunswick. Without the exemption certain vehicles such as public buses, school buses and certain trucks are required to stop at railroad crossings. The grade crossing advance warning plaque or sign appears to be appropriate to provide safety and maintain traffic flow at that location. The infrequent train service at that location would require the train to stop and train conductor to come out and stop vehicle traffic for the train to pass.

**M. Business Development and Education – Kathaleen Shaw, Carla Cefalo**  
Not Present.

**N. Transportation News Update – Bruce McCracken.**  
Transportation events articles were provided as part of the meeting packet.

**O. Staff Activities – George Ververides**  
Mr. Ververides thanked each one for attending the meeting and here for an extraordinary presentation by Mr. Craig Schultz and Mr. RJ Palladino.

**Public Comments – None**

V.

**Adjournment** – Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Ververides. Motion seconded by Mr. Mike Krumier. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Bruce McCracken and Danielle Britton*  
Danielle Britton, TCC Secretary, and  
Bruce McCracken, Principal Planner Transportation