

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY**  
**TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**  
**MAY 28, 2019**

**Attendance**

**Acting Chairman:** Tom Vigna, North Brunswick Township Planner.

**Facilitator:** Trish Sanchez, Voorhees Transportation Center Public Outreach Engagement Team (POET).

**Municipal Representatives:** Mayor Brian Wahler, Piscataway; Julie Grof, Dunellen; Susan Welkowitz, Highland Park; Vincent Sciuto, East Brunswick; Joe Criscuolo, East Brunswick; Sanford Gardner, East Brunswick; Keith Kipp, East Brunswick; Jay Muldoon, Administrator, Metuchen; Greg Gyumoles, North Brunswick Police Dept; Bask Patel, Woodbridge.

**State Legislative/Congressional Representatives:** Paul Onish, representative of Senator Linda Greenstein, 14<sup>th</sup> District; Sean Meehan, second designee of Senator Patrick Diegman, 18<sup>th</sup> District.

**County Transportation Management Association, KMM:** Bill Neary, Executive Director; Morteza Ansari, Program Manager; Chris Gonda, Safe Routes to School Coordinator.

**Public Transportation Providers:** Tom Clark, NJ Transit; Michael Beltranena, Suburban Transit/Coach USA.

**Educational Institutions:** Brendan Torres, Rutgers University; Donald Drost, Middlesex County College.

**Others:** Meredith Hammond, NJDOT; Peter Bilton, NJTPA; Douglas Groff, Edison Resident; Mike and Anne Kruimer, East Coast Greenway Alliance; Ken Wedeen, Somerset County Planning Dept.

**Middlesex County Staff:** Khalid Anjum, Head of Dept of Infrastructure Management; George Ververides, Director of Office of Planning; Ron Sendner, Acting County Engineer; Denise Nickel, Tony Gambilonghi, Bruce McCracken, Mirah Becker, Stan Olszewski, Nick Tufaro, Laurie Sobel, Roma Patel, Jessica Alvarez, Planning Office; John Ferguson, OEM; Jim Polos, Exec. Director MCI; Joshua Cole, Info Technology.

**I. Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order by Acting Chairman, Tom Vigna.

- **Statement on Open Public Meetings Act**

Mr. Vigna noted that the meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act of 1975 and that appropriate notices have been sent.

- **Pledge of Allegiance**

Acting Chairman Vigna called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

- **Moment of Silence**

Acting Chairman Vigna said that there are ongoing daily disasters like the tornadoes in Ohio, floods in the center of the county recently and he called for a moment of silence for each of us to reflect on our blessings and for what we are grateful for. Mr. Ververides added our veterans who gave their lives for us.

## **II. Approval of the March 26, 2019 Minutes**

Correction minutes – Linda Greenstein’s title abbreviation is Sen. Linda Greenstein not ASW.

Move – Mike Kruimer.

Second – Paul Onish.

Passed.

Parking invoices were given to staff for validation.

## **III. Welcome Remarks**

A. Acting Chairman Vigna commented that the Freeholders are supporting the reach out to people of Middlesex County to give their ideas and wants and to be a sounding board to consider what needs to be included in the Middlesex County Master Plan 2040.

The study is currently underway.

For example, if a community wants a Bike/Ped trail in their town that want is a suggestion the Freeholders want to know about. It may or may not be in the plan in the end and it is likely to have been considered on its merits and heard for what members of the TCC think is important to advocate for doing.

## **IV. Special Item**

### **May 28, 2019 Meeting of the Middlesex County Transportation Coordinating Committee on Municipal & Other Stakeholder Input on the Bike – Pedestrian Component of the Transportation Plan Element of the CMP**

The meeting began with an overview by Denise Nickel on activities to date relating to the development of the County Destination 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan, and how the public can

continue to be engaged in providing input on the overall CMP such as through the active Destination 2040 web site: (1) Via the online survey, public engagement reports, and making open comments via the email link. (2) Bilingual survey flyers, cohab story-telling workshop flyers, and infographic flyers were distributed.

Tony Gambilonghi then introduced a seven-minute video that was Frederick, Maryland on general bicycling and pedestrian safety pertinent also to communities in Middlesex County.

Mr. Gambilonghi noted that this meeting was preceded with the survey sent by email to TCC members and municipal representatives to identify concerns, preferences for walking and biking and general recommendations. This meeting will provide the opportunity for municipal and other public input on bicycling and pedestrian concerns of the Transportation Element through a general discussion to follow.

Chairman Vigna introduced Trish Sanchez of the Voorhees Transportation Center Public Outreach Engagement Team (POET) as the facilitator of the discussion. Ms. Sanchez invited the group to bring up their safety concerns and preferences for bicycling and walking, perceived conditions of existing facilities and suggestions for improving the bicycling and walking environment in the County. Observations and comments included the need for bicyclists to obey all traffic laws along with motorists and pedestrians and to avoid distractions; providing safe and well designated access to greenways, providing designated bike lanes with appropriate buffers; educating young people at schools through such programs as Safe Routes to Schools that is administered by KMM; adherence to safe practice of bicycling in same direction as traffic but walking in opposing direction to traffic; the impact of electric scooters on downtowns; the need for contiguous sidewalks; improving difficult crossings through better crosswalks; eliminating conflicts between drivers and pedestrians; use of more countdown timers; need for better street lighting; the advantages of walking as a means of mobility, exercise and recreation; maintaining sidewalks from obstructions, trees and shrubbery which can affect pavement conditions and walking space; and a call for the County to adopt a more effective complete street policy, and to avoid missing gaps along stretches of sidewalks.

**Key Takeaways:**

The meeting provided a wide range of strategies and actions that can be considered in the Bike – Ped section of the Transportation Element as ways to mitigate existing walking and bicycling behavioral problems and infrastructure deficiencies. The comments and suggestions made can enhance bicycling and walking practices where and when feasible and for distances that lend themselves to destination points that may serve various trip purposes by alternative ways in place of driving. These conditions or behavioral practices such as distraction habits when driving, walking or biking can result in unsafe and unattractive conditions for people to walk or bicycle for purposes of mobility, access to transit facilities and final destination points, reducing greenhouse emissions from gasoline powered engines, and for enhancing one’s own personal health and well-being.

Comments from Flip Chart recreated by Roma Patel and Trish Sanchez:

1. What are your **greatest concerns in terms of safety for pedestrians?**

- Road diet and pedestrian islands
- Town needs to adopt and implement complete streets
- Sidewalks
- Realign/allocate budget
- Residential Development build sidewalk to end of street--not just end of development
- County adopt Complete Streets policy
- Leading pedestrian intervals @ intersection
- Education - Keep Middlesex Moving (KMM)

2. Based on those concerns, what are your **biggest priorities for addressing those concerns for pedestrians?**

- Continuous sidewalks - truncated domes
- Difficult crossings - intersections too long (e.g. Seniors, children), who goes first (pedestrians or cars?)
- Inattentive (pedestrians are distracted)
- How do we shift from car-centric to bike/ped
- More countdown signals
- Driver awareness program
- Environmental - lower CO2 = upside less traffic, too
- Streetlights needed
- Maintain sidewalks
- Children walking with/in traffic

3. What are your **greatest concerns in terms of safety for bicyclist?**

- Maps for public (Keep Middlesex Moving), sidewalks/bike routes
- Better standards for bicyclists – expand move over law to bicycles

4. Based on those concerns, what are your **biggest priorities for addressing those concerns for bicyclists?**

- Getting cyclists to act as vehicle
- Connection and coordination throughout county
- Middlesex County Greenway--safe access (to off road facilities)
- Bike Lane buffers (don't force small space to cyclists)
- Maintenance – shoulders

- Education - Keep Middlesex Moving (KMM)
- Better legislation (3ft rule) – expand move over law
- Funding priorities – safe streets, complete streets
- Proactive thinking (e.g. Rent-a-Scooter)

**V. County Staff Reports**

A. Office of Planning Staff Activities

George Ververides reported that important transportation funding programs like Gateway and the Tunnel were stopped in Washington in the Congress and Executive Department without legislative agreement.

B. Destination 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan – Denise Nickel – As above.

C. Funding safety and other resources

Denise Nickel noted that our next TCC would be on July 23<sup>rd</sup> (tentatively) which is after applications for Transit Villages, Safe Streets to Transit and Bikeways are due. They all need a Resolution and approvals. There is a guide for persons making the applications. Crash data is needed to justify the need for these grants. Metuchen, East Brunswick, Highland Park, Dunellen, and Woodbridge were present at the meetings and several DOT and federal guidance materials were provided. MCOP staff assistance is available for program and application questions. All municipalities and the county are eligible.

Congratulations to Highland Park which is receiving a Safe Routes to School Grant of \$250,000 this year.

D. Transportation Events/New Developments

Bruce McCracken reported that Academy Transit had made changes in the Sayreville Routes to NYC which will now continue to serve Wall Street.

E. Middlesex County Area Transit (MCAT)

Laila Caune reported their service operations are gearing up for vacation season.

F. Middlesex County Business Development and Education - Carla Cefalo  
Not present.

#### G. Middlesex County Engineering Office

1. Ron Sendner reported that a \$3 million federal aid project in South Amboy is moving forward which will reconstruct Main Street.
2. Livingston Avenue Complete Streets Federal Project will start construction in August. The project is 1 mile long and will cost \$6 million.

Mike Kruimer asked Ron if the Route 1 North Bridge over the Raritan will provide bicycle access on the existing road under Route 1 to the Edison side. Mike was told Homeland Security must look at that project which Ron Sendner acknowledged. Staff will inquire.

Paul Onish asked Ron Sendner if Landing Lane Bridge over the canal would improve access to the East Coast Greenway? 2022 is the estimated date for the implementation.

Ron Sendner said Landing Lane Bridge over the Raritan is a county bridge with a 5-foot sidewalk which was required by the historic preservation reviews. Ron expects the canal bridge will also have a restricted walkway for historic requirements.

Mike Kruimer noted that trucks from River Road, which are now restricted, and the rerouting of traffic during construction are two problems requiring action. No answers were provided. Ron Sendner acknowledged the issue.

#### H. Middlesex County Office of Emergency Management

John Ferguson reported that 24 of 25 Local Emergency Management Plans have been completed by the June 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. June 1<sup>st</sup> also starts the hurricane season and they are expecting 14 storms this season. They have already named Andrea. Of those, 3 will be major storms and 5 will be hurricanes.

We are also updating our flood evacuation routes and working on two roads that are problems with flooding.

#### I. Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc. – William Neary

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, KMM Inc. had 115 guests attend its Annual Membership Meeting. This year, KMM issued 1,470 tickets to work, rented 38 bike lockers, reached 875,001 commuters on the NJ Traffic App, assisted 1,242 commuters. KMM also sponsored 4 Bike to School days, 27 Walk to School days, 10 bike rodeos, 12 school assemblies, and issued awards to 16 schools who participated. KMM sponsored bike week and

gave awards to participants in that as well. KMM will now have a radio show called Mobility Matters on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. on WCTC. KMM Inc. will have Governor Murphy and Kevin Corbet NJ Transit on an upcoming show on the importance of funding the Gateway Project and Tunnel to New York.

J. Middlesex County College – Donald Drost, Jr.

The college graduated 1,700 students in 2019. We also added a bicycle rack on campus.

**VI. TCC Member Comments/Reports**

A. New Jersey Department of Transportation – Merideth Hammond

Merideth had to leave before the reports.

B. New Jersey Transit

Tom Clark reported that the Princeton Dinky resumed services from Princeton Junction Station to Princeton Campus. The reopening will be a welcome relief to an expected traffic blockage when the Alexander Road Bridge is closed for repairs this summer.

Tom reported that he met with Perth Amboy and that the NEPA process was complete and found no environmental problem in advancing the North Jersey Coastline replacement bridge from 30% engineering design to 60%. The total cost of the project is \$600 million from Superstorm Sandy money. The project includes providing a walkway on the East shore past the former steel plant under the tracks to complete the Perth Amboy Harbor Walk.

Tom also reported that the Local 814 bus route will be relocated in North Brunswick to serve Walmart at Fashion Plaza. Sparingly used service on Herman Road will be eliminated. Saturday night service will run later, and Sunday service will be enhanced.

Tom announced that finally after 28 ½ years, he will be retiring. Mr. Ververides appreciated his years of service and dedication and wished him the best. Tom has been a pillar of communication with the TCC and will be missed.

C. North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority – Peter Bilton

Transportation Alternatives Program Grants were received by Carteret, Metuchen, and Old Bridge for pedestrian and bikeway projects. Upcoming will be NJ Transit grants for seniors and individuals with disabilities, known as Section 5310. Funding under this program is primarily available to Middlesex County MCAT, but is also available to municipalities and nonprofits. The solicitation is expected to be released in July.

On the pedestrian safety front, the NJ Division of Highway Safety will fund Perth Amboy and New Brunswick for additional police enforcement under the Street Smart pedestrian safety program. New signs and brochures have also been released to support that education work under the program.

D. East Coast Greenway Alliance – Mike and Anne Kruimer

Mike Kruimer reported:

- Saturday, May 18 – Mike and Anne supported 18 Free Walkers on the Big Walk 50 miles from Metro Park to NYC.
- Sunday, May 19 – Over 20 riders participated in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Bicycle Tour of Edison/Metuchen.
- Tuesday June 4 – The new Ben Franklin Bridge Accessible Bike/Ped path opening 11 am  
Bayonne Bridge Bike/Ped path opened 2 weeks ago.  
Waiting for a date of the Goethals Bridge Bike/Ped path opening.
- Thursday, June 6 – Jim Sayer, Executive Director of Adventure Cycling will be riding thru NJ on his Maine to Washington DC bicycle trip. Mike Dannemiller and Mike Kruimer plan on riding with him.

E. New Jersey Turnpike Authority – Kevin Dunn  
Not present.

F. Rutgers, The State University – Brendan Torres

The RFP for the federally funded bike share program went out by Jack Molenaar, Director of Rutgers Transportation.

G. Academy Bus Co. – Chuck Kassinger  
Not present.

H. Suburban Transit Coach – Michael Beltranena

Suburban Transit/Coach USA has been purchased by a Los Angeles investment company named Vareer Investment Advisors. They will not operate the company.

Coach does a monthly safety meeting with all our drivers and this month the topic is on bicycles and motorcycles.

Suburban will be getting 20 new coaches this month.

**VII. Public Comments**

None.

**VIII. Adjournment**

On a motion that was made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bruce McCracken  
Principal Planner, Transportation