

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 25, 2019**

Attendance

Officers

Tom Vigna, Acting Chairman – North Brunswick

Facilitator

Trish Sanchez, Voorhees Transportation Center Public Outreach Engagement Team (POET)

Municipal Representatives

Vincent Scuito, East Brunswick Engineering
Sanford Gardner, East Brunswick
Bask Patel, Woodbridge Engineering
Pinder Sumal, Old Bridge Township Engineering
Jasmine Grossmann, Old Bridge Township Assistant Planner
Sean Mehen, Highland Park, SWACC
Scott Miccio, Esq., Cranbury

Special Presentation

Chris D’Elia, Regional Manager, NJ Transit
Mike Viscardi, NJ Transit Planning

State Legislative/Congressional Representatives

Paul Onish, representative of Senator Linda Greenstein, 14th District
Dorothy Power, representative of Joseph Egan, 17th District
Joseph Johnson, representative of Frank Pallone, 6th District

County Transportation Management Association, KMM

Bill Neary, Executive Director

Educational Institutions

Donald Drost, Director of Facilities, Middlesex County College
Dorothy Power, Board President, Middlesex County College

Others

Peter Bilton, NJTPA
Ken Wedeen, Somerset County Planning Staff
Douglas Grof, Edison Citizen Representative
James Karamanos, Highland Park Citizen Representative

Attendance (continued)

Middlesex County Staff

Khalid Anjum, Director, Department of Infrastructure Management
Mirah Becker, Supervising Planner, Office of Planning
Laurie Sobel, Principal Planner, Office of Planning
Carla Cefalo, Office of Economic and Business Development
David Brice, Areawide Transportation
Stan Olszewski, Supervising Planner, Office of Planning
Bruce Mc Cracken, Principal Planner, Office of Planning
George Ververides, Director of Office of Planning
Anthony Gambilonghi, Supervising Transportation Planner, Office of Planning
Stephen Susan, Information Technology

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by George Ververides, Director of the Office of Planning.

- **Statement on Open Public Meetings Act**

Mr. Ververides 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 and Moment of Silence**

Mr. Ververides led the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a Moment of Silence.

- **Introductions**

Each of those present introduced themselves by name and affiliation. Acting Chairman Vigna arrived and took over the remaining part of the meeting.

- **Approval of the July 23, 2019 Minutes**

The minutes of the July 23, 2019 meeting were distributed to the members. Corrections were offered by Carla Cefalo and Paul Onish. Mr. Ververides and Chairman Vigna explained that their corrections will be made before the next TCC meeting. A motion by Carla Cefalo was made and seconded by Bill Neary to accept the draft minutes with the commitment to make corrections by the November 26, 2019 TCC meeting.

II. Welcome Remarks

Chairman Vigna noted that Freeholder Kenny was not present at today's meeting. He welcomed everyone and noted that the recent Hurricane Dorian which destroyed the Bahamas was an experience which flattened a large portion of the lower Islands. He was grateful that New Jersey had been spared such devastation and that we have such a great State and County which is preparing for future storms and climate change.

III. Correspondence

Mr. Gambilonghi reported that the Carteret Ferry project to Manhattan was given a categorical exclusion from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for the implementation of a two-berth ferry terminal, a parking lot and related improvements which will provide service on the Arthur Kill.

IV. Special Items

A. Middlesex County FY2020 Annual State Aid Transportation Program – Ron Sendner, Acting County Engineer

Mr. Sendner stated that Middlesex County has been allotted \$10,963,208 of State aid funds in 2020 to implement eligible projects under the Capital Transportation Program (CTP) State Aid Program. The list of projects which is well overprescribed has been submitted. The projects that are ready to go will be built first, mainly because the State has a set time by when the funds must be spent. When projects are not ready, the projects are taken off the list and are resubmitted following year.

Once again, the money must be used as fast as possible in order not to lose it. Typically, the money is used for five or six projects each year. Sometimes, County funds are used for many reasons usually related to specific constrained projects.

Mr. Vigna asked who would take calls from the public to learn the status of a project? Mr. Sendner said that he would take those calls. He knows what permits, property acquisition, or other status issues there are on the projects.

The pool of eligible projects listed were proposed for adoption. The list of projects is attached to these minutes. A motion to endorse the State aid funded projects was made by Sanford Gardner and seconded by Paul Onish. The vote was unanimous.

V. Special Presentation

A. NJ Transit Services in Middlesex County – Chris D’Elia, Associate Regional Manager and Mike Viscardi, NJ Transit Planning

Mr. D’Elia presented a status of Middlesex County rail projects in a PowerPoint (see attached).

- 1) Avenel Station – Full rail service started on September 9th, 2019 at this Transit Oriented Development site.
- 2) Raritan River Bridge Replacement – Being paid for with funds from Super Storm Sandy reconstruction.
- 3) New Brunswick Station Maintenance – proposed improvements.
- 4) Perth Amboy Train Station Rehabilitation – funded for ADA compliance. Only station with no high-level platforms on North Jersey Coast line.
- 5) Delco Lead Storage and Inspection Facility and County Yard Improvements – some Sandy funding
- 6) North Brunswick Station – Proposal is still at the Community Development phase. Designed to connect North Brunswick to the Northeast Corridor rail line.

V. **Special Presentation (continued)**

- A. NJ Transit Services in Middlesex County – Chris D’Elia, Associate Regional Manager and Mike Viscardi, NJ Transit Planning (continued)

Mr. D’Elia offered his e-mail cdelia@njtransit.com and phone 973-491-8439. He invited questions and requests for more information.

George Ververides commented that the Raritan Valley rail line has a station in Dunellen in Middlesex County and the restoration of the one seat ride to New York City is a long standing request for our residents using the commuter service. Chairman Vigna asked for an explanation of the one seat ride. It was noted that it referred to trains going directly to Penn Station New York without having to change trains in Newark. Ken Wedeen, representing the Somerset County Planning Board and the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition staff, explained that the one seat ride accommodation had been stopped about a year ago when Atlantic City service and the Princeton Dinky service was also stopped. In April 2019 the Atlantic City and Princeton Dinky services were restored. The Middlesex County TCC passed a Resolution supporting the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition Resolution requesting an operational inquiry into the one seat ride restoration.

Mr. Ververides added that regarding the County Yard improvements the proposed loop overpass is also an improvement Middlesex County supports which will allow trains to U-turn without crossing four tracks at grade level at Jersey Avenue.

- B. General Discussion on Public Transit – Trish Sanchez – Rutgers Public Outreach Engagement Team

Mr. Vigna introduced Trish Sanchez to lead a discussion on public transit for the Middlesex County 2040 Master Plan update.

Bill Neary stated that the public says there is not enough public transit. Everybody wants door to door service, and they complain that too often buses and trains don’t go to where the public wants to go.

Mr. Gambilonghi described the local bus service in Middlesex County as substantial. New Jersey Transit has 12 local bus routes with bike racks on the front of the buses which helps with the first mile and last mile connections.

Mr. Ververides recommended shuttles from low income locations like New Brunswick to Exit 8A area for employment shifts. Mr. Neary added 24/7 shift work and shuttles need to be coordinated to meet start/end times. Mr. Ververides added hospitals to that demand profile.

Paul Onish recommended use of “My bus” for NJ Transit routes and Rutgers campus buses from student centers and the Bloustein School.

Mr. Wedeen recommended designing pilots for shuttle routes, for example, to serve Somerset redevelopment on Hamilton Street in Franklin Township, Somerset County.

Bill Neary recommended planning boards require developers to provide shuttle service at trains/buses like Edison Station, Harbortown, Perth Amboy, Metropark or Woodbridge stations. Better connections to Middlesex County College from Plainfield or other areas

V. **Special Presentation (continued)**

B. General Discussion on Public Transit – Trish Sanchez – Rutgers Public Outreach Engagement Team (continued)

to the north served beyond 814 or 813 lines which was suggested by Dottie Power. Bill Neary noted that a Money Magazine survey shows that 95% of the public support mass transit.

Mike Viscardi, NJ Transit Planner, said that transit will provide shelters and signs to municipalities and will support bus pull offs on road reconstruction projects like Livingston Avenue in New Brunswick. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) like Dunellen or Transit Village designation like Metuchen creates opportunities with redevelopment projects. Paul Onish and others support pull offs for safer boarding and traffic flow.

Mike Viscardi said bike racks, bike docks, bike lockers, and now covered corals or bike charging stations, scooter parking are all hot issues as commuters use last-mile vehicles.

Carla Cefalo commented that the County is marketing redevelopment and development sites and plans with County roads and facilities which are important access opportunities, which create investment requests for consideration to stimulate economic growth.

Bus stops need to be designated in the suburbs like Livingston Ave. Tom Vigna noted that the buses stop wherever a rider hails it. Mike Viscardi noted that the policy for NJ Transit is that stops are at the driver's discretion.

Tom Vigna recommended a policy of “performance-based zoning” for large developments similar to North Brunswick did on Main Street/Route 1. Carla Cefalo made the point that it can be done, and she agreed with Tony Gambilonghi and Bill Neary that actions appropriate to the Plan Smart and Street-Smart design potential will work for Middlesex County increasingly as we Plan for 2040. Developers' agreements are increasing in places where developers charge extra rent to make the shuttle happen as fit. Distribution centers and Amazon related job centers create new demands.

Doug Grof made the point that walking is very important as we rebuild Middlesex County. He noted that in Metuchen walking to the train station would make a big difference in peoples' lives if sidewalks were more walkable.

Bill Neary associated “more walkable” to South Brunswick Route 130 Park and Ride where hundreds of homes could be connected to the 940 space Bus Park and Ride with 200 feet of sidewalk. Marketing the condos and rentals with a short walk through the neighborhood would expand the relationships of a whole community and give it an identity.

Trish Sanchez, Vorhees Transportation Center POET Team, thanked the members for a great 2040 Master Plan discussion of workable ideas.

V. **County Staff Reports**

A. Office of Planning Staff Activities – George Ververides

Our main concern from the point of view of our County and the region are the Hudson River crossings and the portal bridge as part of the Gateway project in the Northeast Corridor. Gateway is crucial to the economy and the residents of this region and country.

V. County Staff Reports (continued)

B. Destination 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan and Transportation Funding – Denise Nickel

County staff has been working with Rutgers and all the reports are on-line at
Website: [Middlesexcountynj.gov/destination 2040](http://Middlesexcountynj.gov/destination2040)
E-mail: destination2040@co.middlesex.nj.us
Telephone: 848-932-2876

The most recent work has been “Set the Table” interviews that are now complete, and the report is on-line. The 2040 Destination survey is now complete with 380 responses. The Arts organization has produced “Story Plan” where youth are coached and create the story of their lives and experiences of growing up in Middlesex County. The rehearsal event was held with over 150 participants. The staff has produced 15 topic briefs in draft form, four of which are transportation topics. Rutgers students are also doing another 15 briefs. In December there will be a County Master Plan Workshop where stakeholders, experts and agencies will come to respond to those draft topics.

C. Transportation Funding, Safety and Other Resources – Denise Nickel

Denise announced that the County has received funding for key safety projects including culverts and bridges.

D. Transportation Events/New Developments – Bruce McCracken

Bruce had laid out Transportation news articles for members to look at and to determine if they are interested in the topics reported. Articles of interest include Amazon and its activities and truck traffic at the NJ Turnpike Exit 8A area of Monroe and Cranbury.

E. Middlesex County Area Transit Services – Gary Vesce

David Brice said there is no report at this time.

F. Middlesex County Business Development and Education – Carla Cefalo

Denise Nickel reported for Carla that the County has hired a grant writer.

G. Middlesex County Engineering Office/Traffic Safety – Ron Sendner

Ron Sendner reported that bids have been taken for the Livingston Avenue Complete Streets project, and the County wants to start before the end of the year. It is a one-year project. It will be one lane in each direction with turning lanes and bike lanes, all new traffic signals and lighting along the sidewalks.

H. Middlesex County Office of Emergency Management – John Ferguson

Not present

V. County Staff Reports (continued)

I. Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc. – William Neary

Bill Neary stated that on October 3rd Walk to School Week begins. Last year approximately 7,500 students participated. This year their gift is lighted shoelaces. At the East Brunswick Community Arts Center on Thursday, November 14th, KMM is hosting an Electric Vehicle Workshop featuring support from Municipal Green Teams and where they can get charging stations installed and also acquire electric vehicles for their fleets. Tom Vigna will be a panelist as an expert on Municipal Ordinances for electric charging stations and vehicles.

The County's proposed Transportation Department is in the formulation stage and County Administrator, John Pulomena, met with Bill Neary to include KMM's participation and central role in its structure.

The 2020 funding from NJTPA was received.

J. Middlesex County College – Donald Drost, Jr., Dottie Power

Don Drost, Jr., Facilities Manager of Middlesex County College, had to leave early. Dottie Power who is on the MCC Board of Directors reported that there is a new President of the College, Dr. Mark McCormick. Enrollment is up for the first time in nine years. There are two NJ Transit local bus routes serving the College, and the service is good, and it is expected to continue.

VI. TCC Member Comments/Reports

A. New Jersey Department of Transportation – Meredith Hammond, Zenobia Fields

Not present

B. NJ Transit – Chris D'Elia

NJ Transit has no proposed route changes or schedule changes at this time. Mr. Gambilonghi asked if there are new buses scheduled to arrive on our local routes or Route 9 routes. Mike Viscardi said yes; however, he was not aware of when they will arrive.

C. North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority – Peter Bilton

Another round of Safe Streets programs is being planned. Applications are due on December 20th. There are more tactical urbanism projects which are an outgrowth of the Together North Jersey projects.

D. East Coast Greenway Alliance – Mike and Anne Kruimer

Mr. Ververides reported that the County and Metuchen received an award for the Middlesex County East Coast Greenway at the Complete Streets Summit. He noted that Mike and Anne Kruimer were key leaders on that happening.

VI. TCC Member Comments/Reports (continued)

E. NJ Turnpike Authority – Kevin Dunn

Not present

F. Rutgers – Brendan Torres

Not present

G. Academy Bus Co. – Chuck Kassinger

Not present

H. Suburban Transit – Mike Beltranena

Not present

VII. Public Comments

Scott Miccio, Esq., representing Cranbury Township, presented the following request. (Please see attached.)

Chairman Vigna acknowledged that the request for the Transportation Coordinating Committee to pass Cranbury’s official opposition to Monroe’s ordinance requesting the County to put an eight-ton weight restriction on three county roads in Monroe Township be conveyed to the County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Mr. Miccio repeated that the request is for “the TCC to inform the Board of Freeholders of Cranbury’s opposition and objections to the Monroe ordinance.”

Mr. Vigna asked if Cranbury would have a person at the second reading of the Monroe ordinance on October 7th. Mr. Miccio indicated that possibly he would attend and represent Cranbury at that meeting.

Mr. Neary said that he met with Cranbury Committeeman, Mark Scott, and he had conversations with South Brunswick and the Mayor of Monroe. The outcome of those conversations was perhaps to have some kind of study about way-finding for those trucks. Because no matter how you look at those roads, there is confusion, and the result is that the trucks are driving in circles. The GPS is confusing with the street names. Such a study would create something that would make it easier for the truck drivers to understand the easiest way they could get to where they are going. Presently trucks end up on residential streets.

Mr. Neary added better signage is needed to make it easier for the drivers. Mr. Miccio said he would take these observations and suggestions back to the Cranbury Township Committee.

VII. Public Comments (continued)

Mr. Douglas Grof

Mr. Groff addressed his comment about commuting by train to Mr. Chris D'Elia. In the past when he commuted by train, which typically could accommodate 500 people, for every gallon of gas we burned in our cars we pumped out about 20 lbs. of CO₂. With climate change, our biggest issue is to save the planet. He was interested in knowing the kilowatt or megawatt hours that are saved with mass transit compared with pounds of CO₂ that are pumped into the air for each car burning gas. Any of those measures would be useful to determine how we would reduce pollution and in turn contribute to reducing climate change. A train of 500 people as a starter; also, diesel buses versus electric buses.

Chris responded that those numbers are available, and he will look into it. NJ Transit may have people in their rail and in their Environmental Section who might have specifics. More and better electric buses are coming.

Mike Viscardi offered that NJ Transit will get funded from a Volkswagen settlement for electric buses; and when they do, air quality calculations will be required for the applications.

Mr. Grof said that in summary the bottom line is that every time you burn a gallon of gas, you get 20 lbs. of CO₂ plus other chemical pollution. Mass transit has to be five or six times more efficient.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. Gambilonghi indicated that because of conflicts with the Outreach Meetings of the Destination 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan, the future TCC meetings will be held every other month. The next meeting will be Tuesday, November 26, 2019 at 3:00 p.m.

A motion that was made, seconded and unanimously approved for adjournment at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Transportation Coordinating Committee

Bruce Mc Cracken
Principal Planner, Transportation

lak

p/transportation/tcc/2019 draft minutes/09.25.19