

NORTH JERSEY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AUTHORITY, INC.

SUSAN M. ZELLMAN, CHAIRMAN

MINUTES

May 12, 2008

A. Open Public Meetings Act Compliance - Chairman Susan Zellman opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. Beverly Morris reported that, in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L.1975, adequate notice of this meeting had been forwarded to the Star Ledger, the Jersey Journal, the Record, the Courier News, the Asbury Park Press, and the New Jersey Herald News. Notice had also been posted in the Essex County Administration Building in Newark, New Jersey, and on the bulletin board of the Secretary of State in Trenton, New Jersey.

B. Salute to the Flag

Chairman Zellman led the Board of Trustees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Roll Call

Following the salute to the flag, Ms. Morris called the roll. Sixteen voting members were present. (Attachment 1).

D. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 10th meeting was made by Warren County, seconded by Ocean County and carried unanimously.

E. Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Zellman recalled that the Board endorsed the state's Capital Construction Program for submission to the state Legislature with the stipulation that a list of 34 unfunded projects would be included in the submission. She said that the Board directed staff to continue negotiations over this "Tier Two" list. The Chairman said the NJTPA worked with NJDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to address the future of the unfunded projects, and all parties reached a general agreement that several key projects on the Tier Two list would be reinstated into the state Capital Construction Program and the federally required Transportation Improvement Program. She said that details are still being worked out, and she is optimistic that a TIP that meets the region's most critical needs through the smart use of both federal and state funding can be created. Chairman Zellman noted that the status of the unfunded projects will be included in the draft TIP, which will be released for public comment near the end of the month. She thanked NJTPA, NJDOT and FHWA staff for working in the spirit of partnership to find accommodations that will satisfy all parties.

Chairman Zellman noted that Delania Hardy, Executive Director of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) would be speaking later in the meeting about the upcoming reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU, the federal transportation funding law. She told Board members that they would be hearing more speakers about reauthorization over the course of the next several Board meetings.

Chairman Zellman also encouraged all Trustees to participate in the Saturday, May 31st Board retreat at Raritan Valley Community College. She said the retreat will be an opportunity for open and honest discussion about the Board of Trustees' role at the NJTPA, how they are organized, and how they can be more effective as trustees, as a board, and as an organization serving the best interests of the people they represent.

F. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Mary K. Murphy updated the Board on key Central Staff activities. She described a multi-pronged effort to promote the development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)—Plan 2035, which will provide a vision and foundation for transportation investment in the region through 2035. Recent Central Staff activities include:

- Engaged DMJM Harris, to lead the consulting team, which also includes AECOM, Stokes Advertising, and Howard/Stein-Hudson;
- Established a new Plan 2035 web page at the NJTPA web site. The site will include an online survey to glean public input about the region's long-term transportation issues and priorities. The survey will be promoted through postcards and press releases;
- The NJTPA will host a symposium on the future of transportation on Thursday, June 26. The symposium will feature many state and national experts who will help identify and discuss key trends and forces for consideration in the plan; and
- Issued a request for proposals to develop a series of video spots to augment the public education efforts central to the RTP update.

Ms. Murphy reported that staff also:

- Will issue a Request for Proposals for a Strategy Refinement effort to help develop transportation improvement strategies for the RTP. She noted that Strategy Evaluation and Strategy Refinement helps the NJTPA decision-makers plan beneficial improvements for the region and carry out a federally required congestion management process.
- Arranged meetings with mayors concerning the Northwest New Jersey Bus Study on May 19th and 20th in Sussex and Morris counties. An online survey for the study is also planned.
- Continued work on the NJTPA Safety Priorities Update study. The study will identify priority safety issues around the region and recommend strategies for addressing them. Site visits are being scheduled in each of the subregions to develop recommendations that address serious safety concerns.
- Arranged training sessions for the newly enhanced North Jersey Regional Transportation Model. Ms. Murphy noted that the training will familiarize participants with the capabilities of this important planning resource and help all to understand how to interpret modeling results. There will be an introductory executive session for trustees and planning professionals; a brief expert session for advanced agency staff and consultants; and a three-day hands-on course for subregional and partner agency planning staff.

Ms. Murphy also made the following announcements:

- Central Staff's Kevin Twine was promoted to Manager of Transportation Systems Analysis in the Systems Planning division.
- Former Executive Director Joel Weiner will be honored by the Newark Regional Business Partnership with their 2008 Transportation Leadership award on May 19th at the Newark Hilton Hotel.
- Jerry Mooney, NJDOT, long-time liaison to the NJTPA, will retire May 31st. She thanked Mr. Mooney for all his efforts to improve the planning and coordination so critical to the region's transportation system, and she wished him well.
- The latest quarterly report on staff and subregional activities under the Unified Planning Work Program and the latest issue of the *Communiqué* newsletter were distributed to the Board that morning.

G. Key Discussion Issue: MPO Concerns for the Reauthorization of the Federal Transportation Bill (SAFETEA-LU)

DeLania Hardy, Executive Director, AMPO, presented a brief video that highlighted the nation's myriad transportation issues and problems such as roadway congestion, safety, and infrastructure condition. With the aid of a slide presentation Ms. Hardy summarized the "big picture" transportation problems facing the nation in various areas such as safety, freight movement, rising construction costs, and funding. She pointed out developments that exacerbated the current situation: SAFETEA-LU was finalized two years late and loaded with earmarks; the bill's increased funding was illusionary and inadequate because of earmarks; and the Highway Trust Fund now is in jeopardy.

Ms. Hardy reported on the AMPO process for developing policy. She said that the organization will conduct rounds of surveys of membership to help craft policy positions for the next transportation legislation and hold a town hall meeting at the next AMPO annual conference. Ms. Hardy said that a policy team developed basic positions, met with the organization's board, and will forward the positions on to the membership. Ms. Hardy said that themes AMPO are working on include: energy independence, global competitiveness through metropolitan mobility, and "Rebuild America: Smarter and Greener." A brief general discussion ensued.

All present were invited to stay after the Board meeting for a brown bag session with Ms. Hardy and her associate, Nicole Waldheim, for a more in-depth discussion.

H. Committee Reports/Action Items

Project Prioritization – County Executive Dennis McNerney, Chairman

Freeholder McNerney reported that the Committee recommended approval of three action items at last month's meeting:

- A TIP amendment regarding three Local Lead Projects in the FY 2008-2011 TIP—The Freeholder said that this action would reprogram \$6 million to the Central Avenue Roadway Resurfacing and Intersection Improvement Project in Essex County. He said that the project is ready to use these funds in the current fiscal year, rather than in Fiscal Year 2009 as originally planned. Freeholder McNerney said that funds are available from

two other Local Lead projects. The Helen Street Extension from Antonett Street to Metuchen Road, in Middlesex County must be deleted from the TIP, because the project's sponsor decided not to advance it. He said this will make \$2.1 million available. Also, final design for the Monmouth County Bridge S-31 project will be delayed until Fiscal Year 2010, leaving \$5 million available for reprogramming. Freeholder McNerney said the action will reprogram \$6 million to the Central Avenue project and \$1.1 million to the NJTPA Future Projects line item. He noted that funds in the line item are available for emerging Local Lead project needs.

- A TIP amendment affecting two Interstate 78 Projects in the FY 2008-2011 TIP—Freeholder McNerney said that NJDOT requested this amendment because extreme roadway deterioration has created an urgent need to advance the resurfacing of Interstate 78, East of Tunnel Road to East of Beaver Brook, in Hunterdon County. He said that there is \$10.6 million available for this project, because another Route Interstate 78 project, the Diamond Hill Road Interchange, is being reevaluated and will be removed from the TIP with the action.
- The initial financial plan for the Route 1&9T St. Paul's Avenue Bridge project in Hudson County—Freeholder McNerney explained that SAFETEA-LU legislation requires recipients of federal funding for projects costing \$100 million–\$500 million to prepare a financial plan. He said that the plan must cover five content areas: cost estimate, implementation plan, financing and revenues, cash flow, and risk identification and mitigation factors. Central Staff found the project to be consistent with the fiscal constraint requirements of the Regional Transportation Plan and the current TIP.

Freeholder McNerney reported also that Central Staff outlined the FY 2009-2012 TIP development schedule and is currently finalizing the draft TIP. He said that the required air quality conformity determination will begin shortly. A public comment period will begin later in May, and the Committee will consider the draft TIP at its next meeting. He said the final draft TIP is expected to be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval in late July. Freeholder McNerney noted that, during the meeting, there was an extensive discussion of the Tier Two list of unfunded projects, as previously discussed by Chairman Zellman.

Action Item 1: Approval to Amend Several NJTPA Local Lead Projects in the FY 2008-2011 TIP and of the Accompanying Air Quality Conformity Determination (Attachment 2)

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Essex County and seconded by Newark.

Freeholder John D'Amico, Monmouth County, expressed disappointment that his county's Bridge S-31 project has been delayed and cannot utilize the funds, but noted he would support the action. He said the bridge is in very poor condition, and its major components are deteriorating. The Freeholder said he hopes that NJDOT will continue to work with the county's engineer to try to advance the project as soon as reasonably feasible because it is a key artery in Monmouth County. David Kuhn, NJDOT, said that the department recognizes the importance of the bridge, and will continue to work toward advancing the project.

The motion was carried unanimously.

Action Item 2: Approval to Amend Two Interstate 78 Projects in the FY 2008-2011 TIP and of the Accompanying Air Quality Conformity Determination (Attachment 3)

A motion to approve the resolution and accompanying TIP amendment was made by Hunterdon County, seconded by Bergen County and carried unanimously.

Freeholder Peter Palmer, Somerset County, said he was pleased to see the Interstate 78 Diamond Hill Road Interchange would be included as part of a study in the Project Development Work Program.

Action Item 3: Approval of the Route 1&9T St. Paul's Avenue Bridge Initial Financial Plan (Attachment 4)

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Morris County, seconded by Ocean County, and approved unanimously.

Planning and Economic Development – Freeholder John DiMaio, Chairman

Freeholder DiMaio reported that the Committee recommended two action items for approval at its April meeting:

- Approval of the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan—The Freeholder explained that the plan, which is required by SAFETEA-LU, analyzes the needs of the region's low-income, disabled, elderly and rural residents, who face particular transportation challenges. He said that the plan recommends new strategies and services to improve travel for these populations.
- Approval of the Fiscal Year 2009 Project Development Work Program, or PDWP—Freeholder DiMaio explained that the PDWP is a schedule of project development work that, upon completion, will become candidates for the TIP. He said that the program reflects the results of discussion and consultation between the subregions, the NJTPA, NJDOT and NJ Transit. It contains 123 projects in the DOT portion of the program. The Freeholder said that, like last year, most of the projects are rollovers of ongoing work, smaller “breakouts” of larger studies, or products of the management systems for bridges and drainage.

Freeholder DiMaio reported that at the Committee meeting Central Staff noted upcoming activities for the RTP update, as outlined by Ms. Murphy earlier. He said that the Board is scheduled to adopt the final plan next summer.

Action Item 4: Approval of the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (Attachment 5)

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Middlesex County, seconded by Hunterdon County, and approved unanimously.

Action Item 5: Approval of the FY 2009 Project Development Work Program

(Attachment 6)

Robert Bzik, Somerset County, commented that there was agreement that the Interstate 78 Diamond Hill Road Interchange project would be included as a larger corridor study in the PDWP for 2009. However, he noted it was not updated in the draft document. Martin Hofler, Central Staff, said that the PDWP document would be revised to reflect the description of the corridor study.

A motion to approve the PDWP—revised to indicate the Interstate 78 Corridor Study, which will replace the Interchange project—was made by Warren County, seconded by Somerset County and approved unanimously

Freight Initiatives – Freeholder Peter Palmer, Chairman

Freeholder Palmer reported on the activities of the Committee's March 31st meeting. He said that Staff members updated the Committee on the progress of the Freight Rail Crossing Assessment Study. The Freeholder said that the consultant team completed an inventory of 64 grade crossings on five rail lines and loaded the data into a GIS database. He said that criteria for evaluating the crossings were researched and developed by the consultant team with input from the study's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Freeholder Palmer reported that the five crossings that scored the highest are: Inman Avenue in Edison, Cedar Avenue in Middlesex, Old Hook Road in Closter, Route 601 in Montgomery Township, and St. George Avenue in Woodbridge. He said that staff and members of the consultant team met with local officials in the five affected municipalities to gather input on their perceptions of, and problems with, these crossings. Freeholder Palmer said that staff also held a special stakeholder's meeting on April 1st to hear input from interested parties on the study process and findings. He said that the final draft findings, along with a matrix of possible solutions for problems identified at the crossings, were presented at a public meeting on April 17th, and the project's TAC held its final meeting on May 8th.

Freeholder Palmer reported that the one of the co-founders of New Jersey Rail Carriers, a short line railroad and intermodal municipal solid waste transport business, made a presentation to the Committee. He said the business is successfully transporting sealed containers of municipal solid waste by rail to various landfills, thereby removing trucks from the region's roadways. The Freeholder reported also that a representative of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) spoke about the department's idling rules for diesel and gasoline powered vehicles. He said that enforcement of these rules, which have been in place for twenty years, will soon become more stringent. Freeholder Palmer noted that enforcement efforts by NJDEP and county health agencies are now being supplemented by state and local police.

The Freeholder said that, also at the meeting, the Committee asked stakeholders to provide suggestions for topics to be discussed at future meetings. He announced that the next meeting will be held on June 3rd, and the Committee will be asked to endorse the Grade Crossing Study final report and a resolution seeking Board approval to forward the report to the appropriate agencies for possible action.

I) Public Participation

There were no comments from the public.

J) Time and Place of Next Meeting

Chairman Zellman announced that the next meeting of the NJTPA will be held on Monday July 28th at 10:00 a.m., at the NJTPA offices at One Newark Center, Newark, NJ. She noted that the date of the next standing committees meetings was changed to July 14th.

K) Adjournment

At 11:20 a.m. a motion to adjourn was made by Middlesex County, seconded by Ocean County and carried unanimously.